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[A BEAUTIFUL SONGSTRESS.]

A WINSOME WIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"From Her Own Lips," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF SUITS WITH FORTUNE.

The stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill,
But, oh, for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.

"I WILL do it, I will—I will. We can't starve, and there's no other way."

And the girl clenched her hands and set her teeth as she looked round the wretched little room and into the fireless grate and thought how hungry she was and how her healthy young life craved for all the food she could not get. She was supremely lovely, this eager, excited-looking creature, and every limb was full of lithe grace that would have well nigh turned the heads of painter and sculptor.

Her face was perfect in its contour, and her eyes of the darkest brown, shaded by lashes that swept her velvety cheek; her eyebrows were dark, but by a singular contrast her hair was golden—not the flaxy imitation produced by artificial means, nor the lifeless apology for gold seen on some German head, but brilliant and wavy, full of life and beauty, and looking when the sun shone through it, as it was shining now, like a golden shower.

Stella Catalani might have made a living, and

more, as a painter's model had she known of such work, or chosen to seek it, but she was almost unconscious of her dazzling beauty, and utterly ignorant how to turn it to account. If she had there is a probability that her proud Italian blood—for she was Italian on her father's side, and had nothing of her mother in her save the golden hair—would have risen up in rebellion against such a traffic in her beauty.

There was defiance as well as suffering in her face as she looked round the miserable room which sheltered her and her mother. She had not learned to bear adversity, and it had come upon them in its fiercest and most bitter form.

Only a little year ago and she had been the idolised child of an indulgent father, who denied her nothing and poured out upon his dainty little darling all the love of a passionate, impulsive nature.

Her English mother, good and careful though she was, and loving too in her way, seemed cold and undemonstrative by the side of her southern-blooded father, and was held in far less esteem by the girl, who grew up to womanhood believing that Leo Catalani was the greatest and best as he was the most loving of men.

His poor wife knew better, she knew that her handsome artist husband was a spendthrift and ne'er-do-weel; but she loved him and clung to him as women will, though he spent the money that should have kept her and her child, and wasted his earnings in dissipation and his strength in midnight vigils as costly as they were enervating.

Still she made no moan, for she loved him, and she managed to put away a little money, Heaven only knows how hardly scraped together

and treasured up, so that when at length he died, leaving her with Stella to provide for, she was not the utterly destitute creature she had sometimes feared she would be.

Her husband died in Rome, and she had had her savings transmitted to a London bank, and thither, after winding up what confused affairs the artist had left behind him, she came with her sixteen-year-old daughter. She came to utter and irreparable ruin, to find the bank she had selected had gone with other great business houses in one of those panics which sweep over the commercial world sometimes and like the car of Juggernaut crush everything that comes in their way.

The blow well nigh crushed her, but she struggled bravely on and managed to teach and sew and labour as only helpless women cast adrift on the world do labour to find the bread that should be theirs without toil. But not in London; the mother and daughter drifted away from the great city, for it seemed to them a very wilderness of coldness and despair. Someone, it matters nothing to our story who, recommended the widow to a firm in Glasgow for fine work, and helped to pay the fare to Scotland, and there they settled.

But the work fell off and her health broke down, the air did not agree with her, and they drifted a little farther away still towards the sea on the west coast.

It was at Ayr that Stella was looking listlessly out of the window towards the sea when she burst out with her impetuous speech. They had been there some time now and everything was gone; only those who have come to pawning everything they possess for bread can realise what that "everything" means.

They had dined off a morsel of dry bread, and the landlady had been up to see "Misses Catlin," as she had dubbed her lodger, and informed them that she could not wait any longer for her rent.

"Ye maun either pay or gang, ye ken," she had said, in her blunt Scotch fashion. "I'm just wantin' the siller for my rent, and folk that wad pay are just keepit out, and—"

And Stella had stopped the rising tones of her voice by fairly pushing her out of the room and shutting her with herself into the passage.

"My mother is asleep," she said, "and your shouting at her will not get the money any faster. You shall have it to-night."

"Wha says that?" asked the woman, surprised, for she knew her lodger's affairs perfectly and that they had not a farthing to buy food.

"I do. Don't stare at me like that. You shall have it, I say; it will be time enough to turn us into the street if you don't get it. Go down now, if you please, and don't disturb my mother."

Mrs. Carmichael was not a bad woman in her way, but she had many cares and a struggle to make both ends meet, and even the rent of that miserable room was a considerable item in her own dealings with her landlord.

"And whaur will ye get it, lassie?" she asked of Stella, who turned upon her indignantly and refused to enlighten her any further as to her intentions.

"You shall have the money," she said; "where I get it will be no business of yours."

And she went in and shut the door and cried passionate, scolding tears as if her heart would break.

"I shall have the money, shall I?" Mrs. Carmichael said to herself, as she sought her own part of the house, "and I may turn them out if I don't get it. I have done it lang syne, but that pair creature's nae lang for this world, it's easy to see that, and the lassie does her best; though she's a bit hasty wi' her tongue she's a bonnie bairn and guid till her mither, sae I'll nae be hard on her."

She was right about Madame Catalani, "not long for this world" was she indeed. She was not able to rise from her humble bed, and Stella's heart was torn with sorrow and dread for the inevitable end that was so fast approaching; passionate as she was she was loving and dutiful to her helpless mother, and she would have done anything, no matter what, to have procured her the nourishment that was so necessary for her.

A few pence would be a godsend, the price of a cup of tea and a bit of bread, and she could not get it. No wonder her young heart ached and her eyes were blistered with the tears that would come in spite of herself.

"I WILL do it!" she said again, almost fiercely, and her mother turned her head and looked at her. She was awake now.

"What will you do, dear?" she asked.

"Something, mammie," and the voice took a tone of tenderness as she spoke. "I am not quite sure yet. I am going out presently. I—I have heard of something that will bring in a trifle."

"Did Mrs. Carmichael tell you of it? I heard her, I think."

"It would be a wonder if you had not," the girl replied. "She has a voice of her own. No, she did not tell me of it, dear. I came upon it by accident."

"And you won't tell me what it is? Don't do anything that you will not like to think of afterwards, Stella, my child."

"Set your heart at rest, mammie, dear," Stella replied, with a little laugh. "I'll tell you all about it when I come home, and what's more I'll bring you some money."

She shook up the comfortless pillow and arranged the scanty bedclothes and laid a kiss on her mother's forehead ere she went out of the room and into the street with a wildly beating heart and a mist of tears obscuring all around her.

A fair was in progress at Ayr, a real old-fashioned country fair, with all its glories of shows and stalls and din, and towards the

ground, wather half the town had flocked already, Stella Catalani bent her steps.

More than one person stopped to look at her as she hurried on. Her beauty in its remarkable character was enough of itself to make people stare at her. But there was something foreign in her appearance and her dress, poor as it was, that helped to make up a curiously attractive picture.

What her purpose was she had hardly even whispered to herself. She had formed it hastily, and now that she was in the street and on her way to carry it out she shivered and her knees trembled so that she could hardly walk.

The afternoon sun was shining on the fair ground as she entered it, and lighting up all the busy scene with a golden radiance that made even the commonplace booths and their surroundings picturesque and bright.

She moved about a little while amongst the throng, feeling sick and faint and utterly unable to fulfil her intention, whatever it might be.

"I cannot—oh, I cannot!" she murmured. "I must go back and we must starve, mother and I."

The mere mention of her mother's name seemed to give a fillip to her decision and she roused herself and brushed back the tears that would have fallen.

"For her I will," she muttered, and stood still and drew herself up to her full height. She was essaying to say something, but no words would come, and she turned away from the throng to some more quiet place.

"It is no use there," she said to herself, and she seemed to breathe more freely when she was behind the staring, gaudy booths instead of in front of them.

There was a great deal of building going on close to the fair ground, and as she turned to take the shortest path back to the town the whistle sounded that called the men to leave off work.

She saw them lay down their tools—a goodly muster of them—like a swarm of bees, and she thought that they would listen to her came rushing into her head like an inspiration. Setting her feet firmly that she might not drop where she stood, and clenching her hands tight to keep herself from shaking too much to have command of her voice, she burst into song—such song as those rough men had never heard in all their lives before—a song born of Italian airs and sunny skies, notes like liquid music and words of infinite pathos linked to them.

"Break, break, break,
On thy cold, gray stones, oh, sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me!"

What made her choose that plaintive song she had no idea. It was the first that came to her mind—her mother's favourite melody—and she sang it as she had never sung it before, with all the passion of the pain that was gnawing at her heart, all the energy of despair.

The men stopped and stared at her, as well they might—such a vision of beauty, looking a lady down to her very finger tips, and yet singing in the street like any common tramp.

Most of them stopped to listen, and when she had done a rough voice said from the crowd around her:

"Gie us anither, my woman." And she sang again, wondering at herself. This time one of their own loved songs.

"Oh, for the bloom o' my ain native heather!
Oh, for the burnie, the glade an' the glen;
Land o' rare beauties o' gathered together—
Lassies sae lovely, and braw-hearted men!"

She had won them and they pressed round her with their coppers, here a halfpenny and there a penny, till her hands were full, and they begged for more, and she would have complied but she was weak and fasting and her strength failed her.

She seemed to be walking through a mist. Her eyes grew dim and she would have fallen to the ground but for the timely aid of someone who caught her just as everything was whirling before her in one confused dark cloud.

CHAPTER II.

TIMELY AID.

Like a vapour the golden vision
Shall fade and pass,
And thou shalt find in thy heart again
Only the lot of pain
And bitter, bitter contrition.

Two young men strolled through the fair in the afternoon when Stella Catalani went out on her self-imposed mission. Gentlemen both—one who saw them could doubt that for a moment, though there was hardly a holiday keeper there in his best suit that was not more finely dressed. Well-worn suits of tweed and knockabout felt hats don't look aristocratic on a navvy, but a gentleman may wear them and look like a king in morning costume, and the younger of the two had the nameless something in his face and air that betokens high descent and education.

Both of them wore faultless linen and well-made boots, and the bumpkins from the country and the dwellers in the back streets who were airing their finery looked at them with admiring envy, and the mill girls and the farmhouse lasses wished in their hearts that "Heaven had made them such a man," forgetting how incongruous would be the association could such a thing befall them.

They were very different in station, these two, though they were close friends. The younger and slighter of the pair had more money than he well knew how to spend, for he was a pure-minded, healthy-living young fellow, and had no vicious pleasures to empty his pockets and destroy his health. It was a noble young face that looked about the motley throng with interested amusement, and a grand head that showed its curly locks of Saxon brown from under the shapeless head gear that men affect as so comfortable for their idle hours, a head on which the coronet that would one day be his would sit well and seem rightly placed.

He was the son of the owner of the plot of land on which all the buildings were going on and of many a broad acre in Scotland besides, to say nothing of the English estates he would one day come into—very soon now. The world said that the Earl of Toronto was dying, and that Lord Arthur Petronel would succeed before long to the titles and estates.

Lord Arthur had no wish for the succession, he loved his father dearly, they were united as father and son should be, and he had loved his mother, whose loss he deplored still, though she had been five years in her grave. She had lived to see her son come of age and her daughter grow up into a beautiful and amiable girl, and then she had gone to her rest, loved as few fashionable mothers are loved and lamented by their children.

Lord Arthur Petronel was his father's right hand. He was in Scotland now looking after things for him, for neither father nor son had any idea of letting everything go and taking no heed whether they were being honestly dealt with or not. Honest agents and factors liked them much and extolled them for sensible men and good masters and landlords. Dishonest ones ridiculed them and abused them as being stingy and given to flint skinning. But it was a fact that few estates were better managed and few fortunes grew as rapidly as theirs did.

The building close to the town of Ayr was a fancy of the earl's, and had been begun long before the illness from which he was suffering had come upon him. It was a lot of houses for the poorer classes intended to help them to better homes than the miserable one-room tenements they were given to vegetating in. He had yet to see whether the canny Scotch folk would agree to the notion of as much light and fresh air as he wanted to give them.

The scheme has nothing to do with our story, except from the fact that it took Lord Arthur Petronel to Scotland at that special time and threw him in the way of hearing Stella Catalani's bewitching voice.

He had hunted up Leonard Warburton, his special friend and college chum, and insisted on his taking the day and joining him in his expedition. And so it came about that the two

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went to the fair. Leonard Warburton was older by some half-dozen years than his friend, and had been his protector at Eton and his guide and friend at college. There had not been so much disparity in their fortunes in those days, but just before the elder man went out into the world a great misfortune befell him.

He was the son of a merchant of fabulous wealth, it was thought, and his mother was a lady of birth and long descent, and he had been brought up as became the heir to the fortune of a millionaire. From all this dream of grandeur his mother and he waked one dreadful day to find themselves penniless and alone in the world. The fine fortune had been as a house built on sand and the waves of a mighty commercial panic had overwhelmed it and washed away its very ruins.

There was nothing left to them but a desolate house besieged by angry creditors and a darkened room where something lay too awful to contemplate which they must bury out of their sight and never think of in the years to come without a pang. Mr. Warburton had taken a coward's way of ridding himself of his troubles and had gone out of the world, preferring to face the justice of the unseen life than the censure of this one.

His wife soon followed him, and Leonard was left alone to battle with the world as he could. He fought the fight bravely, asking no man's help and seeking for nothing that he did not earn, till when Arthur Petronel met him after a lapse of some four years he was making great strides as a literary man and bidding fair to stand at the very top of the tree in course of time.

It was pleasant to him to renew the old intimacy and to find himself a welcome guest in Lord Toronto's house, and the earl was glad to have him, and it came to be tacitly understood that he was a kind of Mentor to the generous-hearted young man, who was always getting himself into scrapes through his very goodness.

The two had strolled through the fair and patronised many of the shows and laughed at the British drama, as set forth under canvas. They had seen the fat lady and the learned pig, and shaken hands with the giant and the smallest woman in the world, and they began to feel as if they had had enough of the din and shouting, to say nothing of the dust, and Leonard Warburton proposed they should go back to their hotel.

"In a moment," was the reply. "I'll just go round by the buildings again. I want to look at something."

They made their way round to the back of the booths, regardless of the entreaties that they would go in and see some wonder greater than they had witnessed yet, and came to the building ground just as the first notes of the fresh young voice went ringing up above the din behind them.

"By Jove, Warburton, do you hear that?"

"Hear what?"

Mr. Warburton had been resisting the importunities of a brown-faced child who wanted to tell his fortune and had not noticed the pathetic notes that had attracted his friend at once by their purity and sweetness.

"Why, that song. My sister sings it, but she never gave it expression like that. Whoever it is must be a born musician."

"And trained too," Mr. Warburton said, as he listened. "She is no common street singer."

They pressed forward to where Stella stood with the men crowding round her, and the rough fellows gave way and let them pass till they were close behind the girl, who, all unconscious of their presence, sang on now that she had begun without fear or thought. They watched the clumsily-given alms of the rough men, and heard the request for another song, and listened almost breathlessly till it was finished.

"What a lovely creature," Lord Arthur said. "She cannot be a common beggar."

"No. She looks like a lady."

"I should like to speak to her—to ask her name."

"You had better not, I think. Give her

something and come away. She's too pretty by half."

Mr. Warburton linked his arm in that of his friend and tried to draw him away. He was quite as much astonished at the wondrous beauty of the singer as Lionel was, but somehow he scented danger in those marvellous eyes and that witching mouth that sent forth such liquid music.

"Wait a moment; she's going to sing again. Look here, Warburton, such a voice as that should not be singing here, you know, out in the streets. She is fit for the opera."

"Nonsense, my dear boy. She's a little different from the common run of street singers, that's all. I have no doubt she has a very commonplace history if you only knew it. If you want to give her sixpence, do, and come along. If you get talking to her she'll make you believe anything. I daresay all that beauty is got up for the occasion."

"It isn't, she's loveliness itself," said Lord Arthur, loosing his friend's arm and pressing forward to get a better look at the girl's face. "Look here, she's fainting," and before the words were well out of his mouth, or Leonard Warburton quite understood what was the matter, he was kneeling on the ground with Stella in his arms, trying to get her hat off and looking at her with undisguised concern and admiration.

There was no doubt about the faint, it was genuine enough, and the girl was completely unconscious, and knew nothing of who was holding her. Hunger and agitation are bad things to fight against, and she had had her share of both during the last few days.

"Bring some water, some of you," Lord Arthur said, and a dozen willing fellows dispersed to get it. "Who is she? Does anybody know?"

"Just a lassie singing for hawbees," was all that anyone could tell, and they were fain to wait till she could tell them herself.

It seemed a long time before the dark eyes opened once more and turned with a frightened look on the handsome face that was bending over her. They put some water to her lips and she soon recovered enough to stagger dizzily to her feet and blush crimson at having been as she said "so silly."

The workmen had drifted away by this time. They had heard two pretty songs and paid for them with their coppers and applause. The lassie could not sing any more, that was very evident, and their wives were waiting, and it was no business of theirs what became of her.

"Are you better now?" Arthur Petronel asked, when she was able to speak.

"Oh, yes, thank you. You are very kind. It was foolish of me to faint, but I was very tired and—"

"And hungry" was on her lips as well, but she could not speak it, not to these gentlemen, it would seem like begging, and she had enough and more than enough for her immediate necessities.

"You are very weak—you are trembling still," Lord Arthur said. "Will you not tell us where you live and we will get some conveyance for you?"

"It is quite close, thank you," she replied. "I would rather walk. It is a poor place."

They respected her reticence and asked her no more questions, but Arthur Petronel pressed a sovereign into her hand.

"You gave me more pleasure than I can tell," he said, gently. "I should like to hear you sing again."

"That you shall whenever you like," was the grateful reply, "but I must go home now to my mother. It was for her I did it. She is ill, and will be frightened about me."

She lifted the hand which still held hers to her lips and looked Arthur Petronel full in the face with her haunting eyes.

"Tell me your name," she said, "that I may remember it in my prayers."

He gave it to her without any title or indication that he was anything more than the private gentleman she supposed him to be, and she repeated it to herself.

"Arthur Petronel," she murmured. "I shall

not forget," and then with a bow like any duchess and a smile that went straight into the young man's susceptible heart she was gone and they saw her no more.

"You'll get into mischief, my friend," Leonard Warburton remarked, when they were once more safe at their hotel.

"How?"

"Running after that girl. Take a friend's advice and let her alone."

"How absurdly you talk, Warburton. I am not going to run after her. Why should I?"

"Why should men do anything insane? But you will. I vote we leave the wilds of Scotland the first thing in the morning."

CHAPTER III.

MAN PROPOSES, GOD DISPOSES.

The best laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft agley,
And leave us naught but grief and pain
For promised joy.

LORD ARTHUR PETRONEL shrugged his shoulders at his friend's fancies and laughed.

"I am not going by the first train, most wise Mentor," he said, with a mischievous look in his pleasant eyes. "I am going to stay in Ayr till I have finished the business which brought me here. I have neglected it shamefully, for I have given myself up to the delights of Scotch scenery and the joys of the sea. And I am going to find out what and who that girl is that we have just seen; she is no common street squaller, and I am going to help her if I can. She spoke of a mother for whose sake she was doing such a terrible thing."

"Take a friend's advice and don't do anything of the sort," Leonard Warburton said, eagerly.

He felt more about the matter than he would have liked to own, and he could not tell why he felt sure, by the strange presentiment that comes to all men sometimes, that no good would come out of this odd meeting. He wished with all his heart that they had not come upon the girl or heard her voice. Arthur Petronel was just the impulsive young fellow to go and make himself ridiculous about this strange woman with the golden hair and to do all sorts of Quixotic things for her which he would come to repent bitterly of afterwards.

"If I could only get him away," he said to himself after they had retired to rest. "He will listen to any trumped-up story she chooses to tell him if he finds her. And he will. He does not do things by halves when he begins them."

Arthur Petronel in the solitude of his own chamber was laying a thousand plans for seeing and helping this wonderful girl, whose beauty had made an impression on him very like witchcraft. He could not get her face out of his thoughts, the perfect features and the marvellous eyes that had looked up into his with such an expression of gratitude and timidity. Warburton might say what he liked, but he was sure she was innocence and purity itself. There could be nothing of deceit or anything that was bad in such a lovely creature. He would find her and help her to something better than the necessity for street singing. How lovely she had looked as she stood there surrounded by those rough men—like an angel, a Saint Cecilia. Her mother must be a lady to have such a child, and his should be the hand to lift them from their despair and place them in the position that by right was theirs.

He would do it delicately, so that they should not feel the obligation, and when he was married—His meditations came to a sudden end as the thought of his marriage, which had been announced in the papers as being on the tapis, came into his head. He had no special preference for the lady. He did not dislike her, but she was his father's choice, not his, and the whole of the arrangements had been made in a calculating, business-like way that had no romance about it whatever.

If he had not loved the lady he certainly had not felt any special antipathy to her until now,

and he wondered what made him think of her decidedly pretty face with something very like loathing when she was coupled in his mind with the singing girl's almost unearthly beauty.

"Yes, when I'm married Griseld will help me to find something for her too," he forced himself to say, and then he went to bed and rhapsodised to himself no more.

Griselda was his fiancée's name, the Lady Griselda Toilemache, the daughter of the Duke of Marlethorpe. A good match the world said, even for Lord Toronto's son, and he was the envy of all the impecunious men of fashion who proposed to give their numberless good qualities, their debts and their ancient names, in exchange for beauty and wealth combined.

Somehow Arthur Petronel could not think of his "Griseld," as he was permitted to call her, and this humble stranger at the same time. The two names jostled one another in his mind and made him decidedly uncomfortable, so he tried with all his might to sleep, and after awhile fell into a troubled slumber disturbed with dreams of all sorts of fantastic shapes, which lasted till he was roused in the early morning by someone knocking loudly at his door.

It was his man with a telegram. He had knocked several times, he said, and could not make him hear.

"It's from Petronel, my lord," he said, and the young man jumped up with a feeling of dread in his heart, and admitted his servant. His worst fears were verified when he tore open the paper and read the ominous message sent by his sister, the Lady Carita Petronel.

"Come home at once, he is dying."

All thoughts of everything save his father went out of the young man's mind as he threw aside the paper and began to drag on his clothes in hurried preparation.

"When is there a train?" he asked. "Call Mr. Warburton and find out how we can go the quickest way."

It was all done in a very few minutes, and Leonard Warburton was dressed and ready to go as soon as he was.

"I need not take you unless you wish to go," Lord Arthur said. "It is hardly fair to hurry you so."

"I shall be glad to come," was the quick reply. "I may be of service to you and Lady Carita."

Ayr was left behind and they were whirling south by a fast train before the town had waked to its daily labour or Stella Catalani had shaken off the dream in which she was going over the events of the preceding night. She had walked home radiant with delight at the success of her scheme. All her faintness and weakness was forgotten in the amazing wealth that had come to her. There was the copper the men had given her, heavy and dirty enough, but meaning food and fire for all that. But above all there was the piece of gold slipped into her hand by the handsome stranger, and some silver besides given her by his less demonstrative friend.

"It is a beginning," she said to herself. "It will lead to something better. We shall not starve now, my mother and I."

Mrs. Carmichael opened the door to her with a set, sour look on her face which did not escape Stella.

"I have brought you the money," she said.

"Oh," was all the reply that was vouchsafed as the woman let her pass.

"Yes, I promised you I would."

"I ken ye did, and if it's really there I'll be gey glad of it. But you'd better gang up till your mither the noo, my woman; she's waur."

"Worse! and I've been away from her. Oh, mother, mother! Have you given her anything?"

"A cup of tea, I had naething else."

"Thank you for that. Let me pass if you please," for Mrs. Carmichael seemed half inclined to improve the occasion about something in spite of what she had just told her young lodger.

"Ay, gang by; I'll nae say what I have to say till ye the noo. There'll be time enough by-and-by."

Stella did not half hear her, or comprehend what she meant, and she flew past her and upstairs to where her mother lay white and faint on the pillow.

Worse! ay, indeed she was. Her foot was on the threshold of the unseen world now, and the veil was being lifted by

The shadow cloaked from head to foot,
That keeps the key of all the creeds.

There was no mistaking the look on her face nor the brightness that had come into the dim eyes.

She had rallied somewhat since the seizure that had made Mrs. Carmichael declare her dying, and a pleased light came into her eyes as Stella came in.

"My darling," she said, "I thought I should go without seeing you. It has come, Stella, the world is slipping by me at last."

"Oh, no—no!" Stella said, in agony, for with all her faults—and they were many—she dearly loved her mother. "See, I have brought help. We can have food and fire, and you shall have wine and broth and jelly, and then you will get better—the doctor said so."

"Yes, dear, I shall get better soon."

"But not that way, mother, dear—not that way!" Stella said, throwing herself on her knees by her mother's side and bursting into tears. "You are weak, ill from want, and I have been so long away. I will tell you all about it to-morrow when you are better. See, here is money—gold, mother; we have not seen gold this many a day."

She held up the coin as she spoke and the pale face broke into a smile.

"I am glad, darling, for your sake," the dying woman said, "it will help you on when—"

"And it will help you too, dear," Stella said, rising and going to the door. "Mrs. Carmichael will let Johnny go for what we want, and we will have a nice supper and a fire, for it is cold, and we will forget for this one night that we have been wanting bread."

She would not let the fear that was creeping into her heart have any abiding place there, she was sure, she told herself, that her mother was only weak, that she would rally and be herself again she did not doubt under the influence of the comforts that she could provide.

She opened the door and called Mrs. Carmichael, but the summons only produced "Johnny," a raw-boned, ungainly lad, who sometimes did her little errands, and who announced that his "mither" was busy.

"Take her this then, Johnny, from me," Stella said, handing him the long-desired rent wrapped in a piece of paper, "and come and do some messages for me, there's a good lad."

"She winna let me," was Johnny's amazing reply, "she's gey angry."

"What about?"

"I dinna ken."

But Johnny grinned as if he did ken very well indeed, though Stella could not persuade him to tell her what was amiss.

"Nonsense," she said, sharply, "that's your fancy, Johnny. I cannot leave my mother to go, and she knows it. Surely she will let you go out for things for her."

"For her, ay," came the shrill voice of Mrs. Carmichael from the bottom of the stairs. "But if she werena in the dead thraw almost he shouldna gang an inch. Haste ye, Johnny, I'm wanting my supper."

"I think she's going mad," Stella said, as she proceeded to give Johnny his commissions. But the boy was wise in his generation and answered her never a word.

Stella had too much to do that sad night to think any more about Mrs. Carmichael and her humours.

The sour-faced Scotchwoman had been right when she declared Mrs. Catalani to be dying. Stella made a fire and prepared some dainty food such as she had not tasted for many a day.

But it was too late, with the first sunbeam that glinted in through the cracked window her soul winged its way to the spirit world, and her child was alone.

"And when it's a' ower you'll just please seek out fresh lodgings, my lassie," said Mrs. Carmichael, grimly, when the corpse had been surveyed by the parish authorities and the day for the miserable funeral fixed.

They suited themselves, these parish authorities, and it pleased them to let it lie till there was another to go the same way. So Stella kept her dead for a longer period than was usual with them.

"But that is to-morrow," she said, piteously. "Give me a day longer, to think, to look about, to—"

"Ye'll do that somewhere else. Mine's a respectable house, and I'm no for people that sing about the streets and go skirling at fairs to pick up young men."

"I didn't," the poor girl said, "it was for bread."

"I'm nae caring what it was for, it's a' the same to me."

"And you won't let me stay?"

"Not an hour when she's gane," and she pointed to the poor thin corpse. "Mercy be guid till us! what's that?"

It was only a knock at the front door that made the whole street ring again and brought out heads from every window to see who the new comer might be. A cab from the station had thundered up, and a manly voice was asking eagerly if Madame Catalani lived there.

(To be Continued.)

SCIENCE.

THE "KORDIG ESSENCE."—Highly interesting experiments with a newly-discovered mineral essence took place a short time ago at the laboratory of the eminent Parisian analytical chemist, M. Wuertz, in the presence of the Académie des Sciences. Having filled a lamp with the liquid in question and lighted the wick, M. Kordig, the discoverer of the essence, tossed the lighted lamp up against the ceiling, besprinkling the bystanders as well as himself with the flaming fluid, which however, to the astonishment of all present, proved utterly devoid of heat or burning capacity. He then soaked his pocket-handkerchief in the essence and set it on fire; the essence burnt itself out, but the handkerchief remained uninjured, as did his hat after subjection to a similar trial. Then MM. Wuertz, Dumas, and Friedel plunged their hands into a pan filled with the burning liquid, withdrawing them with fingers all alight, like so many thick jets of gas. They experienced no sensation of heat whatsoever upon the skin—surface thus apparently in a state of active combustion. Other experiments followed, of an equally wonderful nature, conclusively demonstrating that the "Kordig Essence" is capable of producing light without heat. All that is at present known of its special physical characteristics seems to be that it is a thin and colourless oil, evaporating with great rapidity. Its discoverer proposes to adapt it to general domestic use for lighting purposes, its chief recommendation being absolute harmlessness; for it is altogether incapable of exploding, and may be poured, while burning, upon the most textile fabric without the least risk of igniting the substance.

GAS-LIGHTED BUOYS.—The ingenious idea of lighting buoys with gas has been now for some time demonstrated to be of great practical value. A number of them are already in use, and one is about to be despatched to the Suez Canal. They are found to work admirably, and burn continuously without attention for from six to twelve weeks without refilling. One of these buoys was placed on the East Ouse station about a mile and a quarter from the Mouse Light, and remained there from April 18 of last year until January this year, when it was run into and damaged by a passing vessel. In bad weather it was at times hidden from view by the spray. It is estimated that the gas costs about one shilling and sixpence a week and the process of filling can be performed in a few minutes.

Three mentally conscious wonder-rescued "I a Mrs. St study, in it. face, w assume by the with w conside The golden wilder tenanc firmly "Mi you my mad w excuse "Ma wife, b "A



[UNMASKED.]

A BURIED SIN; OR, HAUNTED LIVES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"Kate Branksome's Foe," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WIFE'S APPEAL.

One more unfortunate,
Wary of breach,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death.

THESE are announcements which stun us mentally, paralysing thought, and leaving us conscious of no sensation save that of stupid wonder. Such a one was the speech of the rescued sister of mercy.

"I am not greatly hurt, madame, and I am Mrs. St. John Darrell, your lover's wife."

The scene would be a grand one for a painter's study, so varied are the expressions of the actors in it. The woman with the handsome, sensual face, which accords so ill with the garb she has assumed, hardly feels the physical pain caused by the dog's bite, for the malignant satisfaction with which she deals a crushing blow to one she considers her rival.

The fair girl with the blue eyes and the golden hair is at present conscious only of bewildered amazement. Darrell's swarthy countenance has turned white with haughty anger firmly controlled.

"Miss Carew," he says, calmly, "I offered you my escort, but I did not bargain for this mad woman's advent. If you will accept my excuses I will follow you very shortly."

"Mad woman!" cries she who claims to be his wife, but a stern gesture silences her.

"Another word," he says, "and the dog shall

be at your throat. Do you think I saved your life just now in order that your vile thoughts may be poured into her pure ears? Miss Carew, will you leave us? It is not meet that you should remain in the presence of such a creature as this."

The woman's comely face blazes with fury, her red lips part, but no sound comes from them. The man's repressed passion is the stronger of the two. Stinging as are his words, the quiet contemptuousness of them holds her in check. There is silence between husband and wife until Blanche Carew's slender figure disappears amongst the trees and her light footfall dies away.

"Now you may explain," says Darrell, sternly. "To begin with, why are you masquerading here?"

"I wanted money," is the sullen rejoinder.

"What is that to me?"

The woman hesitates and is silent. She is angry still, but her wrathfulness is as that of subsiding waves after a storm, whilst his confronts her like the black, unyielding granite against which they may beat for ever, making no impression.

"Your last monthly allowance was paid, your next is not yet due. Is it not enough that I have almost beggared myself to secure to you a handsome income? Must I be periodically vexed because your extravagance squanders it too swiftly? Even admitting the excuse for your presence here, how about the breach of that contract for keeping which such money is paid you?"

"The sight of her maddened me. I was jealous."

"Jealous?" repeats Darrell, with a soft, low laugh of scorn which irritates her almost beyond endurance. "You were jealous?"

"I am your wedded wife," says the woman, with growing excitement. "It is true that when you, like scores of other stage-struck youths, fell in love with me, I concealed the indiscretions of my previous career, and played for your edification the role of an ingénue of

immaculate virtue. Otherwise you would never have married—"

She leaves the sentence unfinished in the violence of her emotion. He completes it for her mockingly.

"A THING so vile. Pray continue, if any object can be served by chafing the old sore."

"I was playing for a big stake, St. John Darrell, and I won it. I had no great affection for the honest, chivalrous boy I had ensnared, but I resolved to be faithful to him. I was faithful to him until he found out how much he had lost, and then cast me off."

"I wonder the honest, chivalrous boy did not kill you," murmurs her companion, musingly.

"You did worse than that," cries the woman, wildly. "You taught me the depth of my own degradation. You put me away at once and for ever, as though my touch were contamination. Even the handsome provision you made for my wants sank me lower in sin, because of the condition with which it was hampered."

"Two conditions," corrects Darrell. "One you have broken periodically, forcing yourself into my presence on the plea of wanting money. One you have kept, I believe, until to-day, when, in defiance of our covenant, you published a secret I have sacrificed much to hide, and openly proclaimed yourself my wife. I could have pardoned the first offence as I have done so many similar ones, but the second demands swift and final punishment."

"How can you punish me?"

"By cancelling your allowance and instituting proceedings for a divorce. Hitherto I have been anxious to hide my shame—loath to drag my ancient name in the mire—unduly sensitive about exposing my boyish folly to the gibes and sneers of the world. The fetters might gail me, but they were worn in secret. After this morning's exposure they will be no longer bearable. I shall break them, and that swiftly."

"You want to marry the golden-haired girl," she cries, angrily.

"Do not dare to speak of her," is the stern response. "Even if I loved her as I never

loved woman yet—even if I were free to-morrow to seek her for my wife—I could not venture to ask that she would link her sweet, pure life to such a one as mine.”

“Then you will forgive me this once,” urges the woman, humbly.

“There can be no question of forgiveness,” is the scornful rejoinder. “We are discussing a simple business contract. You have broken its conditions. I shall exact the penalty.”

With a wail of dismay and of fear she looks into his pitiless, unyielding face, but it shows no sign of relenting. With another low cry she sinks upon the mossy sward at his feet and tries to embrace his knees, but he draws back a step and lets her grovel there, wringing her hands in agony.

“It is not badly done. You have not forgotten the old stage tricks, but they are very, very stale to me.”

The incisive contempt of his clear, calm voice seems to pierce her like a knife. Slowly the woman rises. She draws her breath in quick gasps, she presses her left hand to her side as though she were stricken to the heart.

“St. John Darrell, may I make one brief statement, imploring you to believe it, swearing, not by my hopes of Heaven, for I have none, but by the little I prize and hold dear upon earth, that it is God’s truth?”

“Say on,” he answers, carelessly, fumbling in his pocket for a cigar.

“I love you.”

His soft, low laugh of incredulity, so musical, yet so hard, and the click of his cigar case, answer her.

“I love you,” she repeats, passionately. “You complain that I have broken faith, forcing myself into your presence, on the plea of wanting money. It was not money that I craved, but a kind word, and your utter disdain roused the fiend within me and drove me deeper into sin. But in the lowest depths I loved you still.”

“Pshaw!” ejaculates Darrell.

“Listen to me,” she urges, imploringly. “It was a thing of slow growth, this love of mine, it fed as a spaniel feeds, when the master’s foot spurs it. It fed upon your taunts, your sarcasms, your icy scorn. It has grown and grown until it has become a demon, until it might make me a saint.”

Her bosom heaves, her voice falters, her face is deadly pale, and under the influence of extreme emotion its whole character has changed for the better. He cannot but admit to himself that this is no acting, and he contemplates the spectacle (smoking tranquilly the while) with feeble interest. But as she searches his dark, impassive countenance she finds no more compassion there than as though the features were carved in stone.

“Have pity upon me, St. John Darrell. Cast a kind word to me, now and again, as you would throw a starving dog a bone, and for the sake of them I will renounce every vile habit and every evil association. Give to me (the wife you have put away) the merest fragment of your life; once a week, or so, the touch of your hand upon my hair, the breath of your lips upon my cheek, and I will be your slave. It was to say this I followed you here, but jealousy got the better of me for one moment and made me mad. It shall not occur again. I will lie to all the world, and tortures shall not drag from me the secret I told to-day. Only forgive me, and grant me one grain of pity, for all my wealth of love.”

“Impossible,” he answers, sadly, and his voice is fixed and solemn as the tolling of a knell.

Then she bursts into sobs and tears and hysterical weeping.

“You are cruel to me, cruel,” she wails.

“Cold as ice, hard as flint.”

“I am what you made me,” he says, gently. “From the moment that I discovered your treachery the poles were not wider asunder than were you and I.”

She turns her back upon him, that he may not see, and the sobs break out afresh. There is a long, long silence, ere she speaks again. A white horror, nameless, indescribable, is settling

upon her features, but of this he cannot be aware.

“I suppose your resolution to obtain a divorce was not taken to-day?” she asks, and the listless accents might have borrowed some of his own quietude.

“I have long recognised the necessity of a step I was yet unprepared to take,” he replies.

“Promise me one thing,” she cries, facing round upon him, eagerly. “Promise that you will not move in this matter until I have drawn my next monthly allowance.”

He looks at her suspiciously, and takes a pocket-book from its hiding place. The nameless horror upon her ashen features is very conspicuous now. He thinks it is the dread of poverty.

“In any event a proper provision will be made for you. Meanwhile—”

He holds out a little roll of notes, but she waves them away, impatiently.

“I do not need present help, I only ask for your promise with respect to next month’s allowance.”

“I promise.”

“God bless you,” murmurs the woman.

“Good bye.”

Looking neither at him nor before her, but as it were at the reflection of that white horror on her face, she begins to move away. Darrell’s voice arrests her step.

“Before you go,” he says, “I want you to understand that we are not parting in anger. I told you just now there could be no question of forgiveness between you and me; it is equally true that I cherish no resentment for the injury you may have done me this day. Long, long ago I forgave, as I hope to be forgiven; and beside the huge wrong you once did me all minor wrongs are dwarfed to nothingness. Nothing that you do, say, or suffer, has power to stir me much. Good bye.”

The woman’s lips move in response, but no sound issues from them. Gazing ever at the reflection of the horror, she drifts away. The cynic looks after her with sorrowful pity in his eyes. More than he would like to own, her passion and her despair have touched him. Most of all, perhaps, that simple, parting benediction (from such a Magdalen) which the white lips tried, but failed, to repeat. “God bless you, Good bye.”

He watches her receding form until the trees hide it; then he whistles to his friend, the mastiff, and strolls away in an opposite direction. It would be well, he tells himself, to think out the position, and mature his plans, ere he present himself at the castle.

But in point of fact he cannot concentrate his thoughts. They are aimlessly busy with the woman he once called wife. With strong compunction he remembers that the dog’s teeth must have met in her arm, although he had forgotten her hurt until now.

She has forgotten it likewise.

Drifting, drifting away, through the green wood, along the mossy paths, hearing not the song of birds, seeing not the gambolling squirrels, and the rabbits which peep out from grassy tufts, or scud across the narrow drives, heeding not the beauty and the joyousness of this fair world, but contemplating ever, as it were, the reflection of that nameless horror stamped upon her face. Drifting, whither?

She has left the beaten track, and with dull and patient persistence she is forcing her way through brake and briar. The thorns catch at her as though to hold her back, but she puts them aside, and presses onward, with torn dress and bleeding hands, towards the mysterious goal to which she is advancing—presses onward until strength fails her, and from very weariness she sinks to the ground with a groan.

The song of the birds is hushed; the rays of the setting sun glance all askant along the bushes, and still she lies there silent and motionless. Not until the evening shadows begin to close around her does she rise from that recumbent position, her face livid and horrible, as of one risen from the dead.

On, still on, into thicker underwood, into places yet more remote from the foot of man,

until she reaches a willow-fringed pond. Is this her goal?

It is an eerie-looking sheet of water, this pool around which the willows grow in such profusion. Its stillness has about it something weird and unnatural; its blackness suggests great depth, but the woman contemplates it earnestly and without dismay. Only that white, nameless horror enthroned upon her livid features is yet more visible than before.

The ground in the immediate neighbourhood of the pool is rocky and uneven, and almost free from bushes. Stones are scattered here and there; the woman sets to work to collect them until she has accumulated quite a heap.

In the hideous disguise she wears there is on either side an immense pocket, probably found useful by the sisterhood in missions of mercy or of mendicancy. Into them she proceeds to drop the accumulated stones one by one until the last has disappeared. Then she moves slowly, for the weight is great, to the verge of the pool, and contemplates it, long and earnestly, and still without dismay, once more.

It is growing dark now, and the rising wind moans weirdly amongst the trees. The faintest gleam of sunset red lingers yet in the sky, and the woman’s white lips are murmuring something.

“When the last scrap of colour disappears,” she whispers. “When all the gold—all the gold—has turned to gray.”

She draws a miniature from her breast and gazes at it steadfastly. It is a portrait of St. John Darrell, taken years and years ago, in his foolish, chivalrous youth. As she looks, a passing emotion, sweeping over her pale, drawn features, appears to fight and struggle with that which has held possession of them so long. The struggle is a short one; the horror is the stronger of the two. Her white face becomes fixed and rigid, like that of a corpse.

The last gleam of gold has faded; the sky is almost black. About that motionless figure in the hideous garb of black the shadows creep and gather like unquiet spirits of evil, and the wind moans like a dirge. The woman with the corpse-like face presses the miniature, with a passionate gesture of abandonment, to her bloodless lips.

“The time has come,” she murmurs. “Darling—God bless you. Good bye.”

CHAPTER XIX.

ACHING HEARTS.

No one is so accursed by fate,
No one so utterly desolate,
But some heart, though unknown,
Responds unto his own.

THROUGH the solemn woods, so full of gloom and mystery, up the long avenue of stately trees, which nod and whisper to each other as though they discussed a secret of direful import, marches St. John Darrell, with dog at heel, and the dog is dead tired by reason of the distance they have come.

The man is only conscious of soul-weariness. He feels no bodily exhaustion, although he has gone on and on with steady, plodding, aimless steps, from the moment that the trees hid his wife’s receding form, till now, when the stars shine clear and bright in the blue-black sky. He has been thinking out the problem of his life.

Why, he has been asking himself, should he free himself from the claims of this poor, frail woman who inveigled him so long ago into a union which is shameful dishonour? Why incur the exposure—the disgrace? What good end could be served by the procuring of a legal divorce?

Would he have more love in his life? Heaven forbid. He has been well and truly adored in his time, this cynic, to whom such undesired and unrequited affection is an annoyance or a curse. A spoiled pet and darling of society, there are too many idle, pampered women who desire no better office than to ruin themselves for his sake. He can make no return for all they would

wish to lavish upon him. He is loved but twice, with an honourable sacrifice every time, which died in that he had no manhood, with will go with Blanche Carew.

No vain coresses, and is so many years with small effect is he, plotting to induce her to bear his tarnished evasion of the marry the ob but a bitter his great, though words: “If for my wife I would link him as mine.”

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wish to lavish upon him. For himself, he has loved but twice. Once in his foolish youth, with an honourable passion which bade him sacrifice everything to her who inspired it, but which died in a day, killed by the discovery that he had been deceived. Once in mature manhood, with an honourable passion which will go with him to the grave—his love for Blanche Carew.

No vain coxcomb is he, recalling past successes, and imagining that this fair young girl, so many years his junior, may, unsought, or with small effort, be won. No selfish schemer is he, plotting to shake off his trammels and induce her to partake his broken fortunes and bear his tarnished escutcheon. No shuffling evasion of the accusation that he wanted to marry the object of his wife's sudden jealousy, but a bitter truth, wrung from the bottom of his great, true heart, was expressed in the words: "If I were free to-morrow to seek her for my wife I could not venture to ask that she would link her sweet, pure life to such an one as mine."

By slow degrees it becomes clear to him that it will be wise to overlook a breach of contract which will perhaps never be repeated; wise to confide so much of his secret to Blanche Carew that she will respect and keep it; wise to take up once more the burden he has borne so long and go on bearing it to the bitter end; wise, if he values his own peace of mind, henceforward to eschew Blanche's society, and refuse the perilous pleasure of such an opportunity as occurred this afternoon to walk with her through the green woods, and learn from the child's guileless lips that she thinks better of him than he deserves.

It is very dark as he gropes his way round by the stables to the mastiff's kennel, so dark that when he slips the collar about the dog's neck he has to assure himself that the fastening is secure by the sense of touch alone. It is still darker amongst the shrubberies which approach the castle, so dark that, although a stream of light, falling from one of the windows, reveals his face for an instant, he cannot see, in the blackness beyond it, a watcher who has stolen from a drawing-room opening on the lawn into the balmy night air to listen for his coming.

Her thoughts have been all of him since he sent her away, saying it was not meet she should remain in the presence of such a creature as she who claimed to be his wife. "Mad woman" was the epithet he applied to the intruder, but Blanche has not interpreted that epithet as disallowing or discrediting the claim. Without doubt she is his wife, and vile.

"I am Mrs. St. John Darrell, your lover's wife," said the woman.

The assertion was shot at her in the form of a taunt, but the taunt fell harmless from the girl's armour of innocence. It did not penetrate—it does not rattle. She has never thought of St. John Darrell as one who by any possibility might become her lover. She has looked up to him as a man many years her senior in age, and a whole lifetime in knowledge, infinitely her superior in intellect—held in far brighter esteem even by the society which vilifies him. She has revered the cynic for goodness which makes no profession, for kindness which conceals itself behind an inoffensive sarcasm, for boundless toleration and the charity which most men lack.

And she has been sorry for him with quiet, unobtrusive sympathy, feeling vaguely that his life is all vexed and marred, that under the cloak of smiling, indifferent serenity fox-like cares gnaw at and tear him sorely. But it has never occurred to her that this interest and this pity are akin to love.

Her heart has been aching for him all the evening with a dull, stupid pain that knows no intermission; she does not recognise in her freedom from egotism that it aches for herself as well.

Where is he? What is he doing? Why has he not returned? At dinner the others appear to think nothing of his absence, but she starts every time a door opens, hoping it may admit him, yet fearing to look up and meet his mournful gaze.

After dinner she tries to play, but her fingers will only execute the Miserere she practised at the little church, and she tries to sing, but a hard lump in her throat chokes her, so that the attempt is a miserable failure.

She retires behind the curtains of the window recess to look at the night. No one recalls her, so she steps out upon the lawn and glides noiselessly to the wicket gate in the shrubberies, the direction in which she knows he must come.

Is this the smiling cynic, the graceful, indolent lounge, the unruffled man of the world, this poor fellow with the haggard face, the hopeless eyes, the disordered attire, visible for one instant in the stream of light which falls athwart his path?

She had not meant to accost him. She had thought that at the sound of his well-known footfall she would creep away stealthily as she had come. But she is breaking her heart with pity for him. From the thick darkness by the wicket gate there is borne to him in a voice clear and soft and sweet as the chiming of a silver bell the sound of his name.

"Is it you?" he answers. "Child, you should not be wandering out of doors in the night air."

He gropes for her in the blackness above the gate until two little cold hands are laid in his. Comfort and strength have come to him in this encounter. He is telling himself that it behoves him to make light of his troubles, lest through force of sympathy they should overshadow her.

"I was uneasy on your account and could not rest. It is very warm to-night. I shall take no harm," she answers.

He presses the cold hands gratefully. How the touch thrills him! How the mournful music of her sweet, calm voice echoes in the empty chambers of his heart! Resolute as is his self-control, inflexible as he knows his iron will to be, he dares not protract this unsought interview.

"Miss Carew," he says, frigidly, "I am glad of the opportunity to say half a dozen words to you beyond the hearing of other people. It was kind and like yourself to give it me."

She makes no response, for his tone has chilled her. Whilst the words thank her the tone appears to convey a rebuke almost for the presumptuous interest she has manifested. A very humble girl is Blanche Carew. It seems to her natural and right that his strong, self-contained spirit should forbid a stranger like herself to intermeddle with its bitterness. And yet—and yet—would to God that she could comfort him!

"It is said," he continues, "that there is a skeleton in every man's closet. For many long years one has been hidden in mine, and only my lawyer and myself have known of its existence. To-day you have caught a glimpse of it. I trust the sight has not alarmed you."

Her hands are free now, and she is pressing them to her throbbing heart. Oh, how it aches for him as he talks so coldly and composedly and in such well-measured terms, although but a minute ago, when the light fell upon his face, it looked like a painter's conception of despair. How her heart aches for him, and still she does not know that it aches for herself as well.

"Having told you," pursues the frigid voice, "that for many long years my skeleton has been hidden, I need hardly point out that it is imperative the door should once more be shut upon it."

"I will be silent as the grave," interrupts the girl, earnestly.

"Hush!" interposes Darrell. "Make no rash promise—give no rash pledge. Cruel experience has taught me it is far better one's future should be free from such shackles. Should you ever feel it necessary to reveal what you have seen and heard this day let no hasty, unconsidered resolution prevent you. Only remember that such revelation will entail on me worse misery—more shameful dishonour than I have yet endured."

The frigid tones are silent. She tries to answer him, but she cannot speak. That troublesome lump in her throat has swollen to such dimensions it seems to be causing her physical pain. Whilst yet she struggles for utter-

ance a step is heard upon the gravel of the path, a voice calls to her:

"Blanche! Blanche!"

"I am here, mamma."

"I thought I heard another person speaking," continues Mrs. Carow, in accents charged with awful displeasure.

"It is probable that the other person was myself," answers St. John Darrell, languidly. "I have just returned from a long tramp, and to my astonishment I find Miss Carew wandering like a ghost in the darkness. I have been lecturing her upon the imprudence of exposing herself to the night air."

"Imprudence is no name for it," retorts Mrs. Carew, witheringly, and in significant silence the two return to the castle.

One of them is thinking that the saddest of that day's revelations is the readiness with which the man of the world has resumed the faultless, fashionable serenity of tone and manner—the mask it is easier now to wear than to lay aside.

CHAPTER XX.

"A PRESENTIMENT FULFILLED."

What may this mean,
That thou, dead corpse, again in complete steel
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the morn,
Making night hideous?

HALF-PAST ONE in the morning!

The lights of Freston Castle are mostly extinguished, the inmates are mostly asleep. Outside Egyptian darkness has partially given way before moonbeams which would fain shine brilliantly if black, skurrying clouds would let them.

Far away from the castle, in the heart of the woods, stands the keeper's cottage, and in its porch Lord Ferrars and the tutor have just disappeared. As the former stretches forth his hand to knock at the door the man forestalls his intention by opening it.

"Punctuality is the thief of time, my lord."

"The soul of business, you mean. Do not compliment in proverbs, Dykes; the task is beyond you."

The three figures pass from shadow into light and glide noiselessly through the narrow gate. There is no especial need for silence, since they are more than a mile from the spot where their vigil will commence; but they talk little, and then their voices rise hardly above a whisper.

Perhaps the spell of the hour is upon them; perhaps the nature of the expedition and the urgent need for caution which will shortly arise cast shadows before; perhaps Nature's mystic loveliness has a subduing influence.

They are in the heart of the wood, treading a moss-grown path which just permits the three to walk abreast. On either hand are the dark trunks; above, spreading branches are sharply outlined against a sky that would be clear and star-studded did not driving clouds so frequently obscure it; at their feet glisten myriads of tiny dew-pearls, each a gem, truly, of purest water.

There is a solemn stillness and repose about every object save that now and again a dry twig snaps beneath the tread, or a startled rabbit scuds across the drive, or an owl's gray wings gleam in the moonlight.

The comparatively broad path in which they walk is intersected by numberless narrow ones, some of which it would be difficult to tread even in single file, so tangled and overgrown are they.

It is natural that Mostyn's glance should scan these by-ways in passing. Mindful of his promise to Lady Clare he has contrived that Lord Ferrars shall occupy the middle position, drawing the lad's arm through his own to keep him in the centre.

All at once the tutor stops (so suddenly the pupil is brought up with a jerk), shakes himself free, and stepping back a pace looks steadily along one of these narrow ways. Lord Ferrars and the keeper stop back also, follow his gaze, and seeing nothing but trees and under-wood turn their astonished eyes upon Mostyn's face.

It is that of a man almost beside himself with fright. There is a fascinated, eager terror in the staring eye-balls which chills the blood of the observers.

The tutor is pale as death. There is sufficient light to see that drops of cold perspiration have broken out upon his face. He leans a little forward in the attitude of one who watches with dread expectancy for something to appear.

This is so apparent that not until the others have glanced half-a-dozen times from the terrified countenance into vacancy and back again do they speak.

"What is it, sir?" whispers the keeper.

"You look as though you had just seen a ghost, man!" cries Lord Ferrars, jestingly.

Mostyn's glance turns slowly from the path until it rests upon him, and the lad's smiling lips grow grave. Horror and conviction stamped upon the tutor's face rob his answer of any possibility of grim jocularity.

"I have," he says, hoarsely.

"What!" is the simultaneous exclamation of his companions.

"As surely as I see you now, Lord Ferrars, my eyes rested a minute ago upon a man whom I know of my own certain knowledge to be no longer living."

"Impossible!"

"He stood about twelve paces along this track motionless, with folded arms. His eyes looked direct into mine; I feel them still. I should have stopped instantly, but that I was dragged one step forward from having my arm linked in yours. My gaze left him for but one second, in that second he vanished."

"An ocular delusion."

Mostyn shakes his head sadly.

"It be one o' them durned poachers," suggests the keeper, but in rather an awestruck voice.

"It was a visitor from another world, Dykes, as surely as you belong to this one."

"Let us explore," urges Lord Ferrars, incredulously.

Mostyn's colour and his courage have returned together, and he steps briskly along the path.

"This is the exact spot."

There is thick underwood all around through which a man could penetrate only with considerable difficulty and some noise.

"Listen!" exclaims the young nobleman.

But a profound silence reigns around, save that a nightingale pipes faintly a very long way off.

Mr. Dykes prostrates himself upon the soft moss and lays his ear to the ground for quite a minute. Then he rises, looking as though Mostyn's recent alarm had been transferred to him.

"I could hear a cat move a'most within two hundred yards. If so be as you did see a man only twelve paces off, sir, that man were a sperrit surely."

Mostyn smiles faintly.

"Let us proceed. I have a presentiment this night will be an eventful one. I am a doomed man probably."

"Go back to the castle," urges Lord Ferrars.

"To avoid my fate? Not I. The sword of Damocles hangs ever above us. Sometimes I have wished some merciful hand would sever the hair which suspends it."

"But you do not really believe in apparitions?" asks Lord Ferrars, as they walk thoughtfully along.

"Why not? All nations in every age have done so. Is it reasonable to suppose the faith should have been so universally held unless it were substantiated by actual proofs? Hitherto I have reserved my opinion, but I cannot withhold credence in future."

"How should bodily eyes behold a spiritual being?"

"I could adduce half-a-dozen scriptural instances," reasons Mostyn, "in which men's eyes have been opened to a sight of spirits near them. Sometimes I have accounted for these facts by the theory that we all possess a kind of dormant sixth sense, which comes into play under certain rare physical conditions or in extreme emotional exaltation."

Lord Ferrars yawns.

"How dark it grows!" he exclaims.

"The moon 'ull soon be quite hidden by that ridge o' clouds, my lord," replies the keeper. "Best not talk at all now, we are getting near the place."

Ten minutes later the two emerge from the woods, scramble noiselessly over a wall, and find themselves upon the brow of a steep descending bank, covered thickly with furze bushes, the bottom of which is lost in obscurity.

"Come along, my lord," says Mr. Dykes, in a gruff whisper. "The warren be all along the bottom. Stoop a'most double and creep down close after me."

After some laborious progress in the fashion suggested, the two gentlemen find themselves plunging head first into a hollow, a natural indentation in the hill side about twenty yards long, and deep enough to let a person stand upright without being seen from below.

"Hush!" whispers the keeper, warningly. "Here is a heap of stones we can sit upon, my lord. I'll just make sure the men are in their places."

Without further preamble he takes the initiative in squatting upon the uneasy seat, and the next instant an exact imitation of an owl's hooting rises from the spot.

The moon has disappeared altogether. There is only light enough to see a few yards around. Dykes waits eagerly for a response.

It comes. His cry is repeated, once, twice, thrice. He turns with repressed exultation, and speaks in an agitated whisper.

"My lord, the poachers, they be already comin' along the bottom. Presently we shall see 'em. Pull yourselves together, gentlemen."

It is a moment of intense excitement. The keeper has risen from his heap of stones, and has thrown himself flat upon the sloping side of the hollow. Lord Ferrars and Mostyn, disregarding the dampness of that grassy couch, follow his example. They crouch there—hunters waiting for their prey.

Between the hollow in the hill side and the level ground are brakes of furze, which lie like long black shadows below. Presently, the shadows begin here and there to move. The hidden moon shines out from behind a cloud, and the shadows resolve themselves into stooping, creeping human figures.

"They be a-settin' o' the nets," explains Dykes, in a hoarse whisper. "All the bottom, ye see, is reg'lar honeycombed w' rabbit holes, and the rabbits, they be out a-feedin'. When the nets are set, the drive 'ull begin, and when the drive's over then comes our turn. That's it, gen'lemen."

Clearer and clearer shines the light, and the modus operandi becomes visible. The watchers perceive that along the bottom, in a tolerably straight line, is set a net, about three quarters of a yard high; and that on the far side of it, at equal distances, are stationed three men, armed with short, thick bludgeons. The keeper recognises them as "Slippery Sam," "Black Mike," and Reuben Holt. Out in the open, far beyond them, in a large circle are moving figures of men and dogs, that noiselessly patrol the ground.

Hark! the rush of a frightened rabbit, bolting for its hole, its squeal of terror as the net intercepts it, the thud of Slippery Sam's bludgeon descending upon its head. The rabbit is a mass of quivering flesh, the slaughter has begun.

And now the fun becomes fast and furious. Rabbit after rabbit, driven in by the men in the open, is knocked on the head. Three heaps of slain grow slowly and surely, as the patrolling circle converges to the centre. At length the task is over, the poachers have all come in, and have begun to count the slain, and to thrust them into the sacks with which they were provided. Mr. Dykes, motioning his companions to do likewise, draws back cautiously, and stands erect in the centre of the hollow.

"Fifteen o' 'em," he whispers. "Too many, my lord, for us to make many pris'ners, for them chaps, some on 'em, would rather be killed than caught, when their blood's up. Best make sure of the three ringleaders, and never

mind the rest. I'll take Slippery Sam, he's the cunningest. Choose your men, gen'lemen, quick."

"I will take Reuben Holt," says Mostyn, quietly. "Ferrars, you are the strongest of us, you must tackle 'Black Mike.'"

"All serene," replies the young lord, the momentary dissatisfaction induced by Mostyn's choice disappearing at the reason alleged. "Now, Dykes, up and at 'em."

Mr. Dykes's response is another imitation of an owl's hooting, a pause of a dozen seconds, two hoots in rapid succession, and a rush over the brow of the hollow, with Mostyn and Lord Ferrars on either hand. The young men have just time to perceive that from all sides, men who have lain in ambush amongst the furze are hurrying up. The next instant they are in the thick of the gang of poachers, and each has selected his man.

There ensues a scene of wild confusion. Slippery Sam has evaded the keeper's onset, and is making off cunningly, like the fox that he is, but an under keeper trips him up, and in a minute he is secured. Black Mike's bludgeon has been wrested from him and thrown away by Lord Ferrars, and the two are engaged in a pugilistic encounter of the most animated description, every attempt of the former to close with his antagonist being thwarted by a skillfully planted blow. Reuben Holt and Mostyn are wrestling as for dear life, and each has once thrown his man. Now, by a dexterous movement, Reuben disengages himself, runs a few paces, draws a pistol from his pocket, and points it, not at his antagonist, but at the young lord.

It is marvellous with what rapidity and accuracy, when the mind is at extreme tension, impressions photograph themselves in the brain, and action follows thought. During the first of those two moments of time which precede the report of the pistol Mostyn sees the vengeful face of the would-be murderer, the hurried stampede of three fourths of the gang of poachers, the groups of struggling combatants, the look upon Lady Clare's agitated countenance as she confessed her fears for her brother's safety, and in a manner implored the protection of one she dislikes and scorns.

During the second of these moments he accepts the danger, and with one bound covers Ferrars's body with his own. Simultaneously, a big stone hurtles through the air, striking him full on the forehead, and a whistling bullet buries itself in his side.

The fight is over. The keeper's prediction has come true, there are not many prisoners. Still "Black Mike," "Slippery Sam," and one other poacher, with hands and feet tied, lie on the grassy sward, awaiting removal to the nearest lock-up, and Reuben Holt carelessly guarded, but making no effort to escape, kneels beside the prostrate figure of the tutor, and with white lips and agonised protestations affirms that the bullet was never meant for the gentleman whom he has slain.

(To be Continued.)

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

CURIOUS LEGEND.—Sir Walter Scott quotes from Gervase of Tilbury, the old chronicler, the following once popular story concerning a fairy knight. It is very remarkable and well merits reproduction in these columns of curious selections. Osbert, a bold and powerful baron, visited a noble family in the vicinity of Wandlebury in the bishopric of Ely. Among other stories related in the social circle of his friends, who, according to the old custom, amused each other by repeating ancient tales and traditions, he was informed that if any knight, unattended, entered an adjacent plain by moonlight and challenged an adversary to appear, he would be immediately encountered by a spirit in the form

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of a knight. Osbert himself resolved to make the experiment, and set out, attended by a single follower, whom he ordered to remain without the limits of the plain, which was surrounded by an ancient entrenchment. On repeating his challenge he was instantly assailed by his adversary, whom he quickly unhorsed, and seized the reins of his steed. During this operation his ghostly opponent sprang up, and, darting his spear like a javelin at Osbert, wounded him in the thigh. Osbert returned in triumph with the horse of his opponent, which he committed to the care of his servants. The horse was of a sable colour, as well as his whole accoutrements, and apparently of singular beauty and vigour. He remained with the keeper till the hour of cock crowing, when, with eyes flashing fire, he reared, spurned the ground, and vanished. On disarming himself Osbert perceived that he was wounded, and that one of his steel boots was full of blood. Gervase adds that as long as he lived the scar of his wound opened afresh on the anniversary of the evening on which he encountered the spirit.

TRADITION OF ENFIELD WASH.—Enfield is a small town situated ten miles east of London. Over Enfield Wash a mysterious tradition yet lingers. It appears that Elizabeth Canning, a servant girl, having been to visit a relation on New Year's Day, 1753, did not return to her master's house that night, nor was she heard of for a month afterwards, when she came to her mother in a very emaciated and deplorable condition, and affirmed that on the night she disappeared she had been attacked in Moorfields by two men, who robbed her and carried her by force to the house of one Mother Wells, at Enfield Wash. Another person who ill-treated her at the time she said was Mary Squires, a gipsy. In consequence of these grave charges both Squires and Wells were apprehended and tried at the Old Bailey. The former was condemned to be hanged and the latter to be burned in the hand and imprisoned. Subsequent inquiry established the falsehood of the whole story. The gipsy and Wells were set free and Canning in her turn was sentenced to seven years' transportation. Elizabeth Canning, curiously enough, was the popular heroine of the day. The mob warmly took up her side. They proceeded to the most violent outrages, breaking the coach windows of the Lord Mayor and even threatening his life.

BOOKS AND THEIR ORIGIN.—As to the origin of books or writings, those of Moses are undoubtedly the most ancient that are extant. Of the rest, the oldest are the poems of Homer. Several sorts of materials were used formerly for making books; plates of lead and copper, the bark of trees, bricks, stone, and wood were the first materials employed to engrave such things upon as men were desirous to have transmitted to posterity. The leaves of the palm tree and the Egyptian papyrus were afterwards used. Wax and even leather were introduced into use, especially the skins of goats and sheep, of which at length parchment was prepared; then linen, silk, and, at last, paper came into use. The first books were in the form of blocks and tables, but as flexible matter came to be wrote upon it was found more convenient to make books in the form of rolls. These were composed of several sheets fastened to each other, and then rolled around a stick, the whole making a kind of column or cylinder. Books have been termed "the remedier of the mind." The famous and learned Dr. Parr observed that he considered them as the pride of his youth, the employment of his riper years, and perhaps the best solace of declining life. Dr. Johnson advised young people never to be without a book in their pocket, to be read at bye times when they had nothing else to do; observing at the same time that much of his own knowledge—and that was vast indeed—had been in this manner acquired.

ANECDOTE OF CHARLES THE FIRST AND THE GIPSY.—There is a curious anecdote of this king traditional at Hampton Court. He was one day standing at a window of the palace, surrounded by his children, when a gipsy came up and asked for charity. Her appearance

excited ridicule, and probably threats, which so enraged the poor woman that she took out of her basket a looking-glass and presented it to the king; he saw in it his own head decollated. Probably with a natural wish to propitiate so prophetic a beggar, or from some other reason, money was given her. She then said that the death of a dog, in the room the king then occupied, would precede the restoration of the monarchy. Cromwell, who slept in the room indicated, was constantly attended by a faithful dog, who guarded his bedchamber door. On awaking one morning he was shocked to find the dog dead, and exclaimed, in allusion to the gipsy's prophecy, which he had previously heard, "The kingdom is departed from me." He died soon afterwards.

AN INJURED WOMAN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"A Double Engagement," &c., &c.

CHAPTER IX.

ALONG A DARK ROAD.

The path that leads to Virtue's Court is narrow,
Thorny and up a hill—a bitter journey,
But being gone through you find all heavenly sweets;
The entrance is all finity, but at the end
The towers of pearls and crystals you ascend.

JANE KELLY sorrowed over the fate of her handsome sister and mourned her as one dead. She could not but accept the world's interpretation of Rhoda's conduct, there seemed no loophole for the introduction of hope, and with a heart weary with woe she toiled on at home for a week or so, scarcely going beyond the doors and never in daylight.

Then her business began to fall off. The story was getting known, and there was a cry among the respectable people against the Kellys. Had they not always said so, these wise matrons with faces as plain as the proverbial pikestaff, and to whom temptation worthy of the name was unknown? Did they not say so from the first? Rhoda had always flaunted her beauty about, and Jane no doubt had done the same thing, only in a quieter way.

And the father too, he ought to be hanged. That was the matronly verdict, and if their judgment had been infallible hanging was probably too good for his sin. He had plenty of money, spent it freely, and made no secret of where he got it from.

"I have only to ask Rhoda for a few bank notes," he said, "and they come by the next post."

He knew where she was to be found, but he kept the secret close. The opinion of the world affected him very little, for it did not extend to his boon companions, who had no scruples of conscience as to how he became possessed of means and would have partaken of a feast provided for with blood money without one twinge. For all that was floating about Tom Kelly did not care a straw.

He was leading a merry life, and that was all he wanted, and he laughed at Jane at home until she turned upon him and told him something that brought the blood to his cheeks.

"You are a fool," he said, "you know nothing about it. Here, read this bit of Rhoda's last letter to me."

He took a letter from his pocket and tore off the latter half, which he handed to her. Jane read the following lines with mingled emotion, doubt, hope, fear, and joy all contending for the mastery:

"I know that hard things will be said of me, but I do not care. I can wait for time to put me right. I thought I loved Vesey Sutherland, but he is a mere shell of a man. The husk of a nut is not what we want. Sir Archibald has taught me at least to respect him, and I am content. I am happy, perfectly happy, and glad to think that I can help you. Ask Jane not to let her love for me die away, but to wait awhile."

"There, what do you think of that?" Tom Kelly asked.

"It bids us hope," replied Jane, "but there are scarcely the elements of hope in it. Rhoda has sacrificed herself."

"For whom?"

"For both of us," Jane said, "and you alone have accepted it."

"You are a fool I tell you," returned Tom Kelly, roughly, "but I cannot argue with you, my tongue is tied. You have chosen your way, Rhoda and I will go mine. Get David Moore to marry as soon as you can and settle down into the miseries of two pounds a week at your earliest convenience."

"Is it right to marry him now?" Jane asked, wearily.

Tom Kelly made an impatient movement, but did not answer. Turning, he left the room and went upstairs to pack his things. He could afford to go into apartments and live like a gentleman.

David Moore came that night and found Jane alone. She had nothing to do, her business having almost melted away, and was sitting by the fire with her hands clasped before her. He had heard of the change in her prospects, and like a true lover pressed her to become his wife.

"I have enough for two," he said, "and we will go away from here. It is not ten miles across London, but Holloway is as good as the other end of the world."

A week after they were married quietly and leaving Peckham without a sign went to No. 10, Greenland Street, Holloway, which David had taken.

It was a small house with a cheerful look-out, and Jane thought she could be happy there, as happy as she would ever be.

"I shall not drag my sorrow before you more than I can help," she said, "indeed, I will try to forget it."

And she did try. Their means were not great, but their wants were few and it was a happy home.

Tom Kelly of course did not come to see them, as he did not know of their whereabouts. As a matter of fact he did not trouble himself. His life was now one unbroken round of drink and excitement, and it was whispered about that he was at last on the high road towards the end of a reckless life.

But forget Rhoda! No; Jane could never do that, and the vision of her pretty sister was ever before her. It is not easy for those who have not known such a loss as hers to understand the full depth of the misery that weighed her down in spite of her efforts to fight against it. With David, when he was at home, she was happy in a quiet way, but then he left early in the morning and did not return until late. The interval between was long and gave much time for brooding.

To her husband she never named what she suffered. When he came home there was the bright smile of welcome and the cheerful fire and singing kettle upon the hob, and the few short hours of the latter end of the evening were certainly a happy time to her.

David smoked and talked and read the paper aloud, when his late tea was over, with a quiet happiness most enviable.

Now it is a well-known fact that man is not as a rule keenly interested in that first column of the paper where the arrivals into this world, the unions and the departures to the great unknown are recorded, but there never was a woman yet, if she read the paper at all, who did not seek and find some peculiar pleasure in the perusal of these authentic records. Jane was no exception to the rule, and part of the day was spent in perusing the papers David brought home and the column mentioned was not forgotten.

It was about three months after her marriage that she received the final death blow to hope from the list of marriages. It was the tenth on the list that came like a thunderbolt upon her.

"SUTHERLAND—STAINES.—On the fourth instant, Sir Archibald Sutherland, of Powerscourt,

Cumberland, to Lady Clare de Staine, only daughter of Earl Sedgely, of Strathlone. No cards."

It was about three o'clock when she read the lines that were more terrible than a sentence of death to her, for they shut out such lingering hope as she had known, and shattered the vague yearning that by some means Rhoda might yet return to her bright and pure as she had ever known her to be. At eight o'clock, when David let himself in with the latch key, she was sitting in the same place.

There was no light in the room, not even a fire, and alarmed he called aloud for her by name. She answered him quietly.

"I am here, David," she said. "You must forgive my neglect, for my heart is broken. Get a light, dear."

He lit the lamp and went and sat down beside her. He took her hands, cold as a stone, in his and chafed them. He kissed her frozen face, and the ice of agony thawing tears for the first time that day began to fall down her cheeks.

"What is the news now, darling?" he asked, as he drew her to his breast. "Has—anything happened to your father? Is—Rhoda dead?"

"Read that," she replied, pointing to the fatal announcement. The paper still lay upon her lap.

He read it without any great show of emotion. No hope had ever been in his heart from the first. When Rhoda went out from her home he was sure she went to ruin. But he was sorry for her.

"The end has come sooner than I expected," was all he said.

"Oh, David—David," moaned his wife, "what will become of her, without a friend near to save her?"

"If we could get her here—"

"No, David. She would not come here to you. But if I could only find her and have her somewhere close by so that I could run in and see her and help her to go right. But it cannot be. My darling is lost—lost."

"Perhaps if I could see your father he might be able to tell me something about her," suggested David. "I could take a few hours to-morrow afternoon. I suppose he is still at Peckham."

"Go to him," Jane said, "and do not leave him until he has told you where she is to be found. I am sure he knows."

Then she laid aside her grief, and speedily restored brightness to the room. A fire was lighted, then tea prepared, and in half an hour there was the accustomed air of domestic repose around David, sobered by the new weight of sadness.

On the morning after he went down to Peckham and had no difficulty in hearing of Tom Kelly, although there was some little trouble in finding him. David traced him house to house and found him at last in a billiard room sleeping in a chair by the fire. The only other person in the room was the marker, practising some tricks with the billiard balls. He stared at David, and seeing he was not one of his customers continued his experiment.

Tom Kelly was much changed. Already the signs of coming events were upon him. The life he led was at last beginning to tell upon his constitution. On his face was stamped the drunkard's seal, and when David awoke him he stared at him with sodden, vacant eyes.

"Can you come outside a minute with me?" asked David.

"Who are you?" Kelly snarled. "Oh, I see. Young Moore who married my Jane. Well, what do you want?"

"I wish to speak to you," replied David.

"Say what you have to say here then," muttered Kelly.

"I would rather not, if you don't mind."

"But I do mind. If you can't say what you have to say here go away. I can't be bothered."

Stepping down David whispered in his ear:

"Jane is in a bad way about Rhoda. Can you tell me where she is?"

"No. I can't or won't—same thing," Kelly replied.

"Look here, man," said David, fiercely. "Are you dead to every true and honest feeling? Have you made gods of drink and billiards that you cannot turn your attention from them for a moment? Read this," and he thrust the paper into his hand, pointing to the announcement of the aristocratic wedding.

Steadying himself and shading his eyes Tom Kelly looked at the words, and the moment he grasped their purport he leapt to his feet with an oath.

"There has been some mistake here," he cried.

"Impossible," replied David. "Papers don't make mistakes of this sort whatever they may do."

"But I tell you it can't be."

"And I tell you it is."

"Then the lying old scoundrel deceived me," hissed Tom Kelly, "and never kept his word. Look here, David. I'm a wild, reckless, careless fellow, but I am not brute enough to sell my child. I love Rhoda, ay, love her as much as my worthless life, and had I known the treachery that there was in that white-haired, smooth-tongued old villain, I could have throttled him. By—I would."

"You ought to have looked more after him," David said.

"So I ought," Kelly retorted, "but I trusted him and I never doubted Rhoda. But I see how it is; my cursed selfishness has been her ruin—I have done it all. Would that I had died in that prison yonder ere she had got to mix to set me free."

And clasping his head with his hands he rocked to and fro in a grief that was new to him, and strange to the lookers on. The marker, who had caught very little of what passed, was amazed and a little contemptuous. Tears were things for women and children in his opinion, and they had a right to shed as many as they pleased, but a man—Pshaw! it was disgusting, and he expressed his feelings by angrily spinning the red ball across the billiard table and pitching his cue upon the cloth.

David was touched. He saw that Tom Kelly after all had been misjudged, and was not quite so bad as he was supposed to be. There was one little green spot left in his almost barren heart and he had nourished the image of his darling daughter there.

"We must find her at once," whispered David, "do you know where she is?"

"Of course I do, and it is not so far away. She is in Gloucester Gardens. But she doesn't stay there another hour. No, David, if it comes to absolute beggary it can be borne. But this, no, not this, I'd rather see her dead."

As they were going out of the room the marker bawled out:

"I say, Mr. Kelly, you mustn't forget your engagement to-night. The handicap, you know."

"I shall not be here," Tom Kelly replied, "nor am I coming again. I have turned up this and all other places like it for ever."

The marker was too amazed to answer him, but that night he dilated upon what he had seen and heard and the incomprehensible idea of Tom Kelly turning "soft" to eager listeners, who filled in the outlines they were furnished with according to their taste and fancy, so that at least a score stories, all wide of the mark, were soon flying about the neighbourhood.

And they were never contradicted, for from that hour the Kellys and Peckhams were wide apart—a gulf as broad as the sea opening out between them.

CHAPTER X.

AN INJURED WOMAN.

I too. There is a weight of sin Upon my soul—it will not hence, 'Tis therefore that my life is given To one long penitence.

GLoucester Gardens may not be eminently aristocratic but it is eminently respectable. The houses are well built, rich in appearance,

and have the quiet tone which is always associated with money and well-ordered households.

In one of the quietest looking Rhoda had passed the wintry months, charmed by the devotion of Sir Archibald, who had won her gratitude and so inspired a feeling that was certainly akin to love.

She had been disappointed with Vesey, but disappointment in her case had not soured her. When she discovered that he was not all he seemed it was like tearing a handsome veil from a ghastly figure, and her feelings experienced a complete revolution.

But the shock had one effect—it softened her. Deceived by one she was the more ready to listen to another, and when the promise was backed up by its being kept she yielded to the quicker impulses of her heart, and permitted herself to admire her generous benefactor.

Sir Archibald was generous to her, and what more shall be told anon. Meanwhile we must trace out the darker and more painful side of Rhoda's history, the time of despair to someone who knew her and doubt to all.

The house she occupied was well appointed, a better place altogether than her late residence in Alpha Road. That was all newly purchased, at all events, while the one she now occupied had been owned by Sir Archibald for many years past.

There was a grave old housekeeper who looked after the house generally, a soft-footed butler, a deferential footman, and a restrained page boy, in addition to three female domestics. Rhoda had never any orders to give, everything she could desire was anticipated.

And so the winter passed, happily enough, but towards spring Sir Archibald grew restless. Letters with a crest upon them and directed in a woman's handwriting were continually coming from the north, and it was beyond a doubt that these letters irritated him. Rhoda once asked him whom they came from, and his answer long remained in her memory.

"No friend of yours now, and if anything in time to come—an enemy."

The once smooth-tongued, courteous baronet grew irritable, and he would reproach Rhoda for little faults that had never been noticed before, and he charged her frequently with being changed towards him.

"You do not love me," he would say, "and I am not astonished. No Sutherland was ever yet worthy of a woman's love. We are a weak, vacillating race."

"Have I not shown that I love you?" Rhoda would plead.

"Well, yes—yes, in a way you have. You are a darling child, and I am sorry when I am unkind to you. Play something to me."

Rhoda had acquired some knowledge of the piano, and having a quick ear turned it to account.

She played from things she heard in the theatres and concert rooms, places she and Sir Archibald often attended, and would extemporise in a pleasing manner. Her playing always soothed him, and when she finished he would kiss her passionately and call her by fifty endearing names.

As the New Year grew his changeable moods became more pronounced, and occasionally he would be away a day or so at a time, pleading business as an excuse, and at last he began to talk of being absent for a week or so.

"Powerscourt," he said, "wants looking after and I must go there."

"If you must," replied Rhoda, quietly, "I have nothing to say. But I shall be miserable while you are away."

"Ah!" he said, a little drily, "very miserable no doubt. Let me see what concerts there are next week for you to fill up your time with."

"I shall not go out while you are away," she said, firmly.

"But you must drive out or walk for your health's sake."

"I will drive out, but I will go to no concerts."

So it was arranged that he should go at the latter end of the week, and as the time drew

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near his old warmth and love for her returned. It may be said that it increased in tenderness and Rhoda then saw him at his best, as she was never to see him again. He scarce left her for an hour, and lavished all sorts of presents upon her until she would take no more.

"One would think that we were going to part for ever," she said, with a smile.

"Which we are not going to do," he replied. "I shall be here again in a week—this day week, Rhoda."

"This day week?" she said.

At the hour of parting he appeared to be overwhelmed, to be bowed down by a great sense of grief mingled with shame. He held Rhoda close to him, kissed her fondly, but he did not look into her eyes.

She watched him from the window get into the carriage that was in waiting, and she noticed for the first time that his age suddenly seemed to assert itself. The old buoyant way of bearing himself was gone, his head bowed down and his form shrank.

"He is ill," she thought, "and I have not perceived it before. But he will return in a week and then—"

What would follow this suddenly assumed a misty appearance. Vague doubts and hitherto unfelt apprehensions arose in her mind, and the altered ways of Sir Archibald were reviewed again and again. And then arose the fear that he might have found his love wanting.

"There was more pity than love in him when he left me," Rhoda thought. "Pity to me is unendurable."

A proud flash in her eyes bore testimony to the truth of this. Rhoda had chosen her lot and wanted neither aid nor pity. Whether she was right or wrong those who read may be able to judge by-and-by. A man who loved her could hold her fast, but a man who thought proper to pity her severed himself from her for ever.

A week would soon pass and then she would know all. The hazy pictures in her mind would then take some definite shape or be dispelled, and meanwhile she could live on quietly, neither anticipating nor encouraging thoughts of evil.

Each day, the weather being fine, she drove out in a well-appointed landau which Sir Archibald had provided her with, and her drive was generally the park. The season had not yet fairly begun, but people were coming to town, and the Bow and drive were fairly filled, and there were plenty of loungers in the promenade.

Rhoda knew that she was attractive, but she was not self-conscious. She could travel about without thinking that every eye was upon her, and she had no outside airs and graces for the public. Not even the novelty of her position could bring her to the embarrassment so many young ladies new to the world labour under. The world she saw about her was a new and very pretty picture and she enjoyed it intensely.

There was something almost childish in the unaffected delight she took in these drives in the park, but it was only shown in her sparkling eyes and cheeks with a little additional flush in them. The stiff, haughty old dowager, and the proud handsome woman who stared at her with disdain only amused her, and the men so perfectly dressed who honoured her with their bold looks she treated with indifference and contempt.

Once and once only she was put into an agitated frame of mind, and that was when she saw Vesey Sutherland walking down the promenade in company with a man plainly dressed and chiefly noticeable for the animation and intelligence of his face. The latter was talking earnestly, and Vesey was listening indifferently when the eyes of both the men fell upon Rhoda.

Vesey stared coolly and contemptuously at her and said something to his friend, whose face changed to one of gloom and anger as he looked at Rhoda. She was angry with both, flushed a little and from her eyes anger sent forth its fire.

"Who is that other man," she thought, "and what right has he to look at me in that way? I hate him! As for Vesey I despise him. It

drives me mad to think that I once imagined that I loved him."

She had only just come into the park, but she gave the word "Home"—how readily she had acquired all the little expressions in use among people of position—and was taken back to Gloucester Gardens, where she spent the rest of the day in recalling the meeting until she was furious with Mat Ardent, Vesey's companion.

The next day she drove in another direction, preferring a country drive, and all the way she was in constant dread of meeting with Mat Ardent again. For Vesey she cared nothing, he had fallen from his pedestal and could never rise again; but for the other, who was a perfect stranger to her, she had an unconquerable dread that was as powerful as it was mysterious. She felt that before him she would lose her presence of mind.

"And yet what is the man to me?" she mused. "A plain face, a plain figure, and dreadfully dressed; and yet what a spirit there was in his eyes. He looked every inch a man, and I am sure he is honest."

Was it his honesty she dreaded? She could not tell. For herself as yet she had no reproach, for in all she had done she had been single-hearted and true.

The next day Sir Archibald was expected and she stayed at home all day so as to be ready to receive him, but the morning and afternoon passed and he did not appear. When he was at Gloucester Gardens the dinner hour was seven and she charged the housekeeper to be punctual, selecting such dishes as she knew the baronet approved of, but seven o'clock came, half-past, and no Sir Archibald, and she sat down to a lonely dinner.

She ate very little and it was soon over. With a little dessert upon her plate, which she put there mechanically, she turned to the fire, sitting upon a low stool as she had often done when he was there. A feeling of utter loneliness was slowly gaining its hold upon her.

The clock on the mantelpiece had just chimed half-past eight with its small but melodious bell when she heard him softly without and the next moment he was before her.

"Sit still," he said, "no demonstration, Rhoda, until you have heard what I have to say. I will sit here for the present a little apart from you."

He sank into a velvet-covered easy chair and she remained upon her low stool facing him. A moment's terrible silence followed, Sir Archibald, who looked haggard and worn, with his eyes on the fire. Rhoda, pale and with compressed lips, sat quite still.

"It is necessary," said Sir Archibald, "to make myself clear by harking back a little to my family history before I knew you. I was a bachelor, as you know, a man living alone, eccentric in my ways and with no particular love for anybody. Towards my nephew, Vesey, I entertained a feeling approaching dislike."

"I have heard this before," said Rhoda, in a low tone.

"Yes, but it is necessary for me to repeat it," said Sir Archibald. "I disliked him because I disliked his father, who rebelled against me and treated me while he lived with contempt, but as a matter of justice I was obliged to leave the property to his son, being the nearest of kin, unless he did something to disgrace the family name. I was perpetually on the watch hoping he would disgrace himself."

"That was scarcely kind or just," Rhoda said.

"Perhaps not, but I am not concerned on that account. At last I received a report from one of my agents which led me to hope that I had him in the toils at last and that I could with a very good show of justice cast him off. In that report your name was included. I was not so sure of my nephew as I might have been perhaps, but I immediately took steps to punish him. I proposed to Lady de Staine, the only daughter of Earl Sedgely."

"That at least is new to me," said Rhoda, with a fast-growing rigidity in her face and figure.

"So I fear, and in keeping it from you I have been unwise," Sir Archibald replied. "The lady in question had I believe honoured me with the hope of becoming Lady Sutherland, and my proposal was accepted. I interviewed the earl, who is a needy man for his position, and having obtained his consent came on to town. There I had a stormy interview with my nephew, a very stormy one from a Sutherland point of view, and as I was leaving him I met you for the first time."

He paused as if expecting her to say something, but she sat with her eyes fixed upon him and uttered not a word. Sir Archibald went on.

"All that concerns you and me up to the time I left last week you know and I need not dwell upon it here. It is enough that I saw and loved you, loved you with an old man's love that will be a part of myself while I live."

"Oh, thank Heaven for that," exclaimed Rhoda.

"Hear me out," the baronet said, "I have more to tell you. All the sweets of my story, if there are sweets in it, are gone and the bitters must come. Having proposed to Lady Clara and obtained the sanction of her father there was no going back."

"No going back?"

"You ask me, child, and I do not wonder at it. No going back for a man like me. I have told you that the Sutherlands are weak and infirm of purpose, they cannot withstand outside pressure, and Lady Clara having accepted me would not let me rest. I sought to break off the engagement by coldness, but nothing could change her. All the world, our world, had heard of our coming marriage, and unless the song came from her there was no avoiding it."

"And did she give it?"

"No, Rhoda; she was blind to my coldness, ignored my silence and kept her quarry in view. I do not blame her, for the heyday of her youth is gone and she is no longer young. It was her last chance and she clung to it."

"Go on," said Rhoda, quietly.

"How can I?" said Sir Archibald, burying his face in his hands. "Can you not guess the end?"

"You have married her?"

"Yes, four days ago, and we are now here upon a loveless honeymoon, two creatures as wide apart as the poles."

Rhoda had now a face of marble, but she rose up and walked to the mantelpiece, where she stood resting her arm upon it and looking down upon the wretched Sir Archibald with a look of mingled wonderment and pity.

"I suppose," she said, "you know what you have done?"

"Too well," he moaned.

"What is my life to be henceforth?"

"One of sacrifice I fear, unless you—"

"Stay, Sir Archibald, let me clearly understand you. You are really married to this lady?"

"Yes."

"And you are sure she does not love you?"

"Love me," said Sir Archibald, with a strange, hard laugh, "she is a woman of stone. There is no man living who could galvanise her into a being of flesh and blood. Already we understand each other and we are to live apart."

"Under the same roof, of course."

"It is too early to let the world know anything."

"But why are you here to-night?"

"To ask you to forgive me. To beg of you to try and think kindly of one who loves you as he never loved a creature before."

"I forgive you and pity you," she said. "Is there anything more?"

"Nothing."

"I honour you at least for that," she said, moving towards the door. "I know that I am bound to be silent with regard to you for awhile, I have promised that, and for good or ill that silence shall be kept."

"And from me, Rhoda, you will accept—"

"Nothing. I return to the life I left."



[FAREWELL FOR EVER.]

"No—no, Rhoda," Sir Archibald cried, as he rose up and stretched his arms imploringly towards her. "Do not take away the last comfort of my dishonoured life. From the moment I learnt to love you it has been my object to lift you out of the slough of poverty and to place at your disposal means for living—"

"Say no more, Sir Archibald," interposed Rhoda, softly, "I did not seek that alone. I was happy with you, for I loved you."

"Truly loved me, Rhoda?"

"With all my heart."

"I could never wholly think so," Sir Archibald said, with a despairing motion of his arms. "The cynical world I have lived in preaches that May and December are ever ill-matched. Heaven forgive me. I have always thought that it was my wealth that held you to me."

"The wealth that I now give back to you," Rhoda said; "let that act be my judge."

She would have left him then, but he was too quick for her, and stood between her and the door.

She drew herself up angrily, but he bowed low with a deprecating motion of his hands.

"I will not detain you much longer," he said, huskily, "unless you—you relent."

"Relent?"

What dastard hope there might have been in his heart was almost scattered, but he made his last effort—and failed.

"There are lands beyond the seas, and if you love me—"

"Sir Archibald, let me pass. You deepen my wounds and add to my injury."

"But you will forgive?" he cried.

"If you can forgive yourself," she answered. "Oh! what madness could have possessed you? But farewell, for ever; in this world we shall, I hope, never meet again."

He drew aside and let her go by. When she was gone he locked the door and threw himself down beside a chair, burying his face in his hands. The usually calm, imperturbable man was rocked to the very foundation of his soul with agony.

"I knew I should suffer," he moaned, "but not such misery and shame as this. It is unbearable. How could I have been so mad?"

Then he started to his feet with anger against the woman he had so lately espoused and cursed her.

He denounced her for not letting him rest, for hurrying him into an act fraught with so much degradation, and this way spent the tornado of his passion.

As he grew calmer something of the old look returned, and having unlocked the door he drank a glass of wine and rang the bell. The sleek-footed butler responded to his summons.

"Hatchett," Sir Archibald said, "get me a hansom, I am going out alone."

The cab was soon at the door, and the wretched baronet, striving to maintain something of his old spirit, went downstairs. At the door he paused.

"Hatchett."

"Yes, Sir Archibald."

"If anything unusual happens here report it at once to me at Thomas's Hotel, I shall be there until the morning. After that telegraph to the Hotel l'Anglais at Paris."

"Yes, Sir Archibald."

Then he stepped into the hansom and was driven away, and Hatchett went down to the kitchen to report that it was "all over" upstairs, and they need not be respectful to "that mincing party" any longer.

A few minutes later when Rhoda rang the bell nobody answered it. It was not rung again, and a little after ten o'clock Rhoda left the house and turned her face toward Peckham.

As she was crossing Bishop's Road Bridge she saw two men approaching whose forms appeared to be familiar, and as they drew nearer she recognised her father and David Moore.

They saw her too, and David drew back. Tom Kelly took his daughter's hand and pressed it.

"Where are you going?"

"I was on my way to you," she replied.

"That is David with you—is it not?"

"Yes."

"Tell him I would rather not speak to him now, but I will again some day."

David readily left and hurried off to Holloway to tell Jane the news of Rhoda having been found, and Tom Kelly and his daughter went by the Metropolitan Railway to Ludgate Hill, and from thence to a quiet hotel he knew of.

"I'll see that you have a comfortable room," he said, "and we will not talk until the morning."

"In the morning," Rhoda said, "we will talk of the future."

"And forget the past, darling," he said.

"I do not wish to forget it," she said, simply.

Rhoda was shown to her room and passed a sleepless night, but towards the morning the stupor of utter fatigue overcame her and she did not awaken from it until past two o'clock. By the time she was dressed it was past three, for she was thinking deeply and dressed slowly. Her father awaited her in the coffee-room, where there were no other guests, the hour being a quiet one.

They sat down to tea and Rhoda noticed that her father did not put any spirit into the favourite drink. He saw her look and answered it.

"I'm done with it in the old way," he said. "I am a changed man."

While they were talking the waiter brought in an early edition of an evening paper and handed it to Kelly, who opened it to see the day's news.

An exclamation from him drew Rhoda's attention, and she saw he was terribly pale.

"What is the matter, dear?" she said.

"There has been an accident on the railway," he replied, "and somebody you know is killed."

She took the paper from him and glanced at the paragraph headed, "Terrible railway accident." First in the list of killed was the name of Sir Archibald Sutherland.

(To be Continued.)



[A SURPRISE.]

ALL OR NOTHING: A MAN'S SIN AND A WOMAN'S FAILURE. (A COMPLETE STORY).

A "low sea-sunset" flamed into the sea on the Irish coast. The tossing waves, crested with red light, were visible from the windows of Castle Lackgold; a girl stood at one of these windows, staring out upon their grand and shifting beauty.

She stood in a great upper corridor running across one end of the castle—a corridor against the walls of which hung knightly armour and portraits of the lords of the house of Lackgold—the Lords O'Dare—that was the family title.

A sad young face was this that stared out of the window; its owner hardly a pretty girl, although she was a girl who would scarcely be passed by in a crowd. There was a certain dignity and charm about her pallor, her slender grace, her grave, calm eyes, all framed in a wealth of pale-gold hair.

She wore a mourning dress which seemed in keeping somehow with her pallor and her serious air. She might have been twenty or twenty-one, but she looked older; her look of care did not accord with the gay indifference one associates with extreme youth.

"How is my father?" asked a voice at her side, abruptly.

She started, turned a shade paler—she never blushed, by the way—and looked up with an air of gentle deprecation to the new comer, a young man, tall, gaunt, as serious as she was; he was of the blonde type too, with a cast of countenance that would look better on plaster than on canvas.

The colouring was dull and leaden, but the

expression and the form of the face were fine and noble.

"About the same," she replied to his question. "Spencer says he had a bad night. He seems irritable this morning, but he does not complain of more pain."

The old lord was dying by inches of gout in the stomach, complicated by another terrible disease. Nora O'Halloran, his sister's child, had the chief care of him, relieving his body-servant, Spencer, sometimes at night, sometimes during the day.

"Has Charlie come in?" more abruptly than before.

"No, he has not. I fancy he has gone over to Dunbarton Lodge. There's a gay party there—come down for the hunting."

"I want to see him."

Nora glanced up at her cousin in some surprise. It seldom happened that these brothers met. It seemed odd now that Geoffrey should desire this interview.

"Is anything wrong?" she asked, involuntarily.

"Something is always wrong—always has been since Charlie has been a responsible person. But just at present things are more wrong even than usual. I have heard from my business man in Dublin; he sends me my cheque-book. My brother has been using my name. That is the long and the short of it; raising money on false pretences, giving himself out to be the Honourable Geoffrey instead of the Honourable Charles Dudleigh. Honourable! What a farce!"

"I hope the knowledge of this can be kept from his father," was Nora's first thought.

"Which is my excuse for coming to you with these evil tidings of one whom I know your affections invest with a certain forgiving tenderness. But I trust to you to prevent this disgrace from clouding my father's last days more than they are already shadowed by embarrassments and failures of every description. It is a deep regret to me that Charlie is not worthier of your love."

"I have not been able to make this explanation before. I know what you think; it does not matter, perhaps, except—I pity Charlie from the bottom of my heart. I would do anything to save him. Sometimes I have wondered whether it was my duty to make the sacrifice for him he has for years been begging me to make. But it would be a terrible sacrifice. Lately I have seen that in becoming his wife I should be running counter to the laws of Nature, which are God's laws in the end. But it breaks my heart sometimes to realise that perhaps what he calls his love is one of his goads to perdition."

She turned on Geoffrey Dudleigh such a distressed, grief-worn face that his whole heart went out to her.

"Oh, Nora," he said, "this is a melancholy, an unlucky hour, our superstitious countrymen would say, for me to urge my suit; but for the first time I feel that perhaps you will listen to me. I have little to offer you: a tarnished name, a ruined inheritance; but I have kept an ideal of purity and uprightness ever before me, because I have always loved you so dearly, and whether you accept me or not my whole life is steadfastly consecrated to the endeavour to make myself worthy of you. Nora, I love you from the bottom of my soul."

Her circle had been circumscribed to be sure, her life having been spent in a dull routine of duties in this dull old castle; she had seen few men, and those either of the type of her hard-drinking, quarrelsome uncle, or of her reckless, unprincipled Cousin Charlie; therefore, it was, perhaps, less of a compliment than it might have been under more favouring circumstances that her Cousin Geoffrey stood to her as the type of manly faith and goodness.

Tears came into her eyes; she had been so lonely in the past, perhaps the memory of this fact saddened her now.

But when Geoffrey took her hand gently she resigned it to his clasp; and when he drew her to his breast and held her firmly clasped against his faithful heart it seemed to

her that this consoling rest made amends to her for all the previous disappointments and trials of her life.

"How strange that you should have fancied I cared for Charlie!" she said, presently, raising her head and drawing a long sigh. She remembered her uncle would be waiting for her and Spencer waxing impatient.

"I could not fancy that you liked me—such a dull, commonplace fellow; and Charlie adored you, that was easy enough to see. Besides, Charlie has always been a favourite. I have heard of his conquests by the dozen in Dublin and London. It is to his credit that he has remained true to you, in spite of your discouragement, as I now see, because I have very little doubt that he might have made a rich marriage ere this. But he has a profound feeling for you."

Here a door slammed at the other end of the corridor, and a bell rang loudly.

"That is your father's bell! He wants me!" cried Nora, speeding away.

She found the old man querulous and suffering. He wanted to be read to; he wanted to be rubbed; he wanted to be talked to; he had been neglected; he was of no account to anybody; he had better be in his grave; he was dying of starvation; his cook was poisoning him—why did not the only woman about the place see to it that the kitchen was properly managed? It was a hard case that everything was going to sixes and sevens because he was laid on the shelf—a hard case indeed.

Where was Charlie? Charlie was the only soul about the place who cheered him and kept up his spirits. Geoffrey was like a death's-head, and systematically made the worst of everything. But Charlie kept up his spirits. Where was Charlie?

Nora believed at Dunbarton Lodge. Sir John Dunbarton had come down for the shooting with a gay party of Englishmen. Had he heard of St. John's marriage? No? That was strange. Wait; there was an account of it in the Court Journal. Nora would look it up and read it to him.

Confounded nonsense! What did he care for Court Journals and weddings? All stuff and tomfoolery. Nevertheless, he listened with grim attention whilst Nora read him the account, interpolating with reminiscences of this person and that person whom he had known in his own young days at the viceregal court or in London.

Lord O'Dare had loved the world—he still loved the world. Nothing was so interesting to him still as these glimpses into the gay life out of which he had passed.

Nora read the accounts to him mechanically, dreamily, but with a delightful animation of manner that did credit to her dramatic proficiency.

No one would have supposed that, meanwhile, her thoughts were rambling on; going over the details of the housekeeper's account-book—they were very poor—planning how the servants' wages were to be paid; turning her last winter's walking dress upside down in imagination.

But there was one direction her thoughts did not take. She did not permit them to wander for a moment towards her recent interview with Geoffrey. That sacred and happy memory was reserved for the time when she should be entirely alone.

It would overpower her at times that such an interview had occurred, making every difference in her fate, but she would hurry away from this realisation; she would read on and on—descriptions of toilets, lists of grand guests at grand entertainments; this at the top of her lungs too, for the old lord was deaf, did not like to miss a word, and yet had no imagination wherewith to supply any omissions.

Spencer had gone to sleep off the effects of his vigils of the preceding night, and Nora was aware that she was "in" for hours of reading and waiting.

The afternoon waned, and she and her uncle took refuge in a game of chess, prolonged into

the deep twilight; then Spencer came with lights, and presently the first bell rang.

She went up to her own room to make the slight change of costume which she still observed in spite of the decay in other forms and ceremonies at Castle Lackgold.

This change, on the present occasion, consisted in pinning a white kerchief, with a frill of white lace around it, over her black gown. She longed for a flower—a white rose was the flower she thought of—to pin in her hair in honour of her betrothal. It seemed so commonplace that there should be no outward sign of the deep joy at her heart.

As she was leaving her room the one serving-man of the castle brought her a bouquet of hot-house flowers.

"Wid Mither Dudleigh's compliments," the man said.

Nora gave a little cry of delight. She never doubted that Geoffrey was the sender. She ran back into her room, put the flowers in water, all except one rose, which she pinned in her hair.

Then she pursued her way downstairs; she stepped in as usual at her uncle's room to see if he wanted anything. He looked up from the bowl of gruel he was eating.

"Hoighty toighty! you are very fine to-day. Flowers, I swear! That rascal Charlie I dare say. Tell him he's an undutiful dog not to have been near his old father all day."

In spite of the fact that Geoffrey was a model man, and model son, the old lord's heart clave unmistakably in love rather to his youngest born. Nora had always seen this. She realised it doubly to-day, with a jealous pang for her Geoffrey. It was hard that his life of affection after all should be repaid by only a grudging regard.

She met Geoffrey in the hall, and when he offered her his arm passed her hand through it, and came into the great, dark, ill-lighted dining-room with more gaiety and animation than Geoffrey had ever seen in her before.

"Oh, I am so happy!" she whispered to him, at which poor, reticent Geoffrey could frame no word of reply.

But the pressure of his hand was eloquent, also the look in his eyes as Nora's sought his.

In the dining-room, with his back to the fire, stood Charles Dudleigh—a tall, beautiful youth, in the "midnight and flourish of his May," with a magnificent physique and a gay, bright, careless face, as nearly perfect as might be in form and features.

"The dances of the Death's Head," he remarked, as his brother led Nora into the room. "Really, Geoffrey, I must congratulate you upon your efforts to shake off your funeral aspect. I only wish you could succeed better. But Nora! What has come over her? She is absolutely transformed. What is it? It can hardly be that poor little white rose she has honoured me by wearing."

"I did not know that you had sent me the flowers I received just now," Nora said, instantly.

"I fancied they came from Geoffrey." She would have liked to tear out the rose and fling it at his feet, so outraged was she by his whole air of insolence to Geoffrey. But she knew how important it was to keep the peace between the brothers, and she added, with the tender, tranquil smile which was one of her charms:

"How good it was of you to think of me. It was odd. I had a moment before been wishing for a rose, and then yours came like a fairy gift."

Charlie was subdued directly. Geoffrey took his seat at the table and ate his soup in cold silence. The memory of the wrong he had suffered at his brother's hands pressed upon him. His presence was intolerable to him—an insult and a disgrace. He longed to come to an understanding with him and then part for ever.

Nothing ever disturbed Charlie's appetite or ruffled his gaiety. He ate a heavy dinner in spite of the coarse fare and bad cooking to which these lordlings were reduced. When the wine began to circulate Nora withdrew.

The mail had come, and there would be some-

thing to read to her uncle. She expected Geoffrey to follow her—he never stayed with Charlie during the heavy libations with which that young Bacchus washed down his pork and potatoes. But to-day he made no haste to be gone. He would say his say to Charlie now.

He looked at Nora in such a stern, fixed way as she stood in the doorway looking at him, wistfully hoping that he would follow her, that she vanished. In truth, he scarcely saw her. His whole soul was absorbed in the painful task before him.

Charlie shortened the task by opening the subject immediately.

"I suppose you have heard from those Grifflins in Dublin," he began. "I imagine that is the reason you look so extra candaverous. Heaven! Your priggishness is enough to make a fellow desperate. Well, let's have it out. Your cheque-book was sent to you to-day. I know it. I keep myself informed. Well, what is to be done in the matter?"

"To begin with, I consort with honest men. Therefore I cease to consort with you. The same roof shall not shelter us two. Either you go or I go. If you will go quietly there need be no exposure and no disgrace. The world is large. Begin a new life beyond the seas."

"This means war to the knife?"

"It means that I will defend the little that is left of my forefathers' land from the clutches of a thief. It means that if you persist in staying here to prey upon my father I will defend him from your cupidity with all my strength."

"You forget that he would not wish to be defended against me. What chance would you have with me before him if he could really be allowed to choose? You may be his heir, that being a matter beyond his volition, but you are by no means his favourite. He could do without the Honourable Geoffrey very comfortably."

"I repeat that I will not prosecute if you will withdraw quietly," Geoffrey said. He kept his temper perfectly—apparently.

Then he left the room. Charlie drank on and on. The Lackgold wine-cellars were the only portion of the estate that showed no sign of decadence. They were amply stored in spite of the prolonged revels the old lord had kept since he came into his inheritance forty years ago. The O'Dare wines were famous all over the United Kingdom, and they had accumulated during the reign of two Lords O'Dare, from whom Geoffrey had inherited evidently his aesthetic tendencies. The one serving-man deserted his young gentleman to attend to the wants of his own inner man, but Charles Dudleigh scarcely noticed his departure. He sat with the decanter before him, his handsome blue eyes fixed on the dying blaze on the hearth, pouring the generous wine down his throat, until his senses were bemuddled completely. This was the condition he had aimed at attaining; nevertheless, having succeeded in beclouding himself, he could no longer be held responsible for his own actions.

One idea that occurred to him was to stagger up to his father's room and expose that miserable sneak Geoffrey. With this benevolent intention he seized a candlestick from the buffet, and lighted himself down the cavernous gloom of the great hall to the staircase, equally dark, up which he stumbled; so along to the streak of light under a door which his dull wits reminded him was that of his father's room.

Charlie gave a rap on the door, muffled, yet vehement. Nora opened it directly, with an apprehensive expression on her face. It was an unusual hour for a visitor—even were that visitor a son; besides, Charlie's approach had been unusual, and had startled her.

As Charlie came in now he scarcely reassured her. He kissed her boisterously to begin with, a very unusual performance, which left her cheeks tingling and her heart beating with displeasure. Then he advanced to his father, who put out his palsied hand with evident affection.

"I have been looking for you all day, my boy; I want to hear about that hunt at Dunbarton Lodge."

"Grand old time," Charlie said, thickly.

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"Good horses. Good wine. Pretty women at the Lodge. But I am here to speak on confidential business. The long and the short of it is I'm done for, and I'll have to cut. Geoffrey has me in his power, and Geoffrey is the very devil to pay. Signed his name, you know" (with an extraordinary confidential leer). "All right between brothers, but Geoffrey doesn't treat me like a brother."

At this crisis, Geoffrey, who had been passing down the corridor outside, heard his brother's voice, and came in. He took in the situation in a flash—his father's bewildered look, Nora's terror, Charlie's besotted state. He walked up to Charlie and took him by the arm.

"This is no place for you, sir; come with me directly," he said, and marched the handsome beast away.

The brunt of the battle was left to Nora, as it happened, since Charlie was by that time too entirely stupefied by the effects of what he had been drinking to make any resistance to his indignant brother, who conducted him to his own room, and there deposited him.

But Lord O'Dare had a most alarming seizure. Physicians were called in, but their advice and aid were in vain. He died before morning.

All through that night Nora watched his struggle with death until it seemed to her that the struggle was her own, and when morning broke, and his spirit had fled, it was as though she had died herself.

She went to lie down, and slept an hour or so from sheer physical exhaustion, then awoke again to life and pain—to the heavy burden of the cloud of disgrace that hung over their house.

It mattered little, as far as the ill he had wrought was concerned, that Charles Dudleigh awoke from his drunken slumbers to a sense of his crimes. But that very sense made him stolid and stubborn. He followed his father to his grave with a conviction that he had himself been the victim of an accumulation of misfortunes.

It dawned upon him that an intimate understanding existed between Nora and Geoffrey, and this impression maddened him. His one idea now was to get away. But he no less made extravagant demands upon Geoffrey, considering the then state of the family finances.

He insisted that he should be pensioned off once for all. He had no claims whatever in law, but he emphasised his father's wishes and intentions towards him, laying great stress moreover upon his good intentions for the future, and the impossibility that he should make a fresh and honest start in life unless he had the wherewithal to do so.

He even had the effrontery to appeal to Nora before he left to assure her of his devotion, and to urge her to consider him as a lover. He burst forth into jealous and passionate denunciations of Geoffrey. He detested him from the bottom of his heart, and he chose to blame him because Nora would not listen to himself.

Nora had learned self-control in a hard school. She exercised this hardly acquired virtue now. She left Geoffrey entirely out of the question. She banished from her thoughts even, as far as possible, the well-worn phrase that her heart was given to another. She tried to persuade Charlie that under no circumstances could she ever have accepted him.

"We are not suited to each other in the least. We are cousins, and with that tie of blood between us better friends than we would otherwise have been, because our characters and tastes are diametrically opposite. We have not an opinion in common. You have abandoned the religion of our fathers to begin with, on which I build my hopes. From that great point at issue down to our convictions as to social matters—your love of a gay, dissipated life, my preference for a quiet one—we are as different as the poles. Nevertheless, I can never cease to be deeply interested in your welfare, which will have my daily prayers. Let us part so for the present; work out your own salvation, and come back to old Ireland respected and self-respecting in course of years,

and you will find me here, God willing, ready to receive you with open arms."

"Really, with open heart as well as open arms? You will promise to keep your heart open for me?" persisted Charlie.

"Open to you as to all your friends," persisted poor Nora, in her turn. "I cannot promise ever to entertain for you more than the cousinly friendship I feel for you now." She paused. "It is a motherly feeling, my poor boy. You have never had a mother within your memory. Don't laugh at me. But my heart goes out to you in precisely that pitying, protecting way."

Charlie sat staring at her pale, fair young face stained now with tears. A mocking laugh half rose to his lips, but his better angel turned it to a sigh. He rose and took Nora's hands in his and kissed them passionately.

"You scorn my love, but I go on loving you all the same. And in proportion to my love for you is my hate of the man who has estranged us. We won't discuss that point. I am not to be turned from my just indignation."

His just indignation! Fancy anything just connected with a passion-torn creature like Charles Dudleigh.

Poor Nora realised this with a pang. When he was gone, what a relief it was to compare him with her Geoffrey, and to turn to Geoffrey for peaceful sympathy and companionship—Geoffrey with his temperate mind and reasonable character.

And yet how Charles Dudleigh needed her and longed for her. There can be no doubt that she could have bettered him in this world and set him in a higher, nobler path had she been able to return his affection. But he wanted all or nothing. The friendship she offered him was far from satisfying him. He wanted her love—entire, exclusive, as love must be.

That was the last she knew of Charles Dudleigh for years. In the following spring Geoffrey and Nora were married. The ruin of the house of O'Dare was complete financially, and it would have been an absurd farce to continue to live in the old castle, limited as Geoffrey was by the conventional restrictions as to the way an Irish lord should earn his living.

And yet this lord and his wife could not starve. Geoffrey had fully made up his mind not only that they should not starve, but that he would earn for himself and Nora an honourable independence. When he proposed to her to emigrate to the United States she agreed, as she would have agreed to any proposition of his.

"We will come back again," Geoffrey said, "when I am a rich man and can keep up the old state in the old castle; until then we will close it. We will be as happy in some little house where we can keep the wolf from the doors more easily. I doubt whether outraged public opinion would permit Lord O'Dare to earn his bread in this country. But across the water it will be different. There I can be plain Geoffrey Dudleigh, and black boots for a living if I choose."

They settled in Chicago, which was then the rising city of the West. Geoffrey buckled down to business and succeeded. He bought real estate and resold it at a fabulous advance in a few years. He also dealt in railroad shares. His legitimate business was in iron, which was then the most money-making business in the country. It seemed likely that before he was an old man he would be able to go back to Castle Lackgold and set up his Lares and Penates again there. Yes, and his son could resume the old title, and be Lord O'Dare on the old lands as his fathers had been before him.

In ten years' time Geoffrey and Nora had a beautiful little family growing up around them; their lovely children were celebrated through all the circle of their acquaintances. And Nora had the art of dressing them in a thoroughly picturesque way. Mrs. Dudleigh's children looked as though they had just stepped out of a picture-book, people said.

It was about this time that the society of Chicago was electrified by the appearance of an

Englishman who brought letters to the first men of the place, by whom he was treated with the greatest consideration. The young girls raved over him.

Mrs. Dudleigh was leading a very secluded life just then, having lost a little child recently; therefore she had no opportunity of meeting this conquering hero. But all her young friends poured his praises into her ears. He was so handsome, so distinguished, so charming.

"And only think, Mrs. Dudleigh, his father is a duke! The Duke of Northumberland. Real Shakespearean, isn't it? Only think how perfectly grand to be the Duchess of Northumberland! Only I believe he will never be the duke unless his brothers—two of them—die. They are between him and the title. Isn't it a pity? So now he is only a lord—Lord Alfred Stanhope. Isn't it a lovely name?"

When Geoffrey came home to his dinner that night Nora asked him if he had seen the noble Englishman.

"I am invited to dine with him to-morrow at Senator Shuttlecock's," Geoffrey said. "I rather distrusted what I heard of him; too much gilt and tinsel. But it appears his letters are all right. It seems he is making desperate love to Shuttlecock's daughter, who is an heiress in her own right; and the Shuttlecocks are wild over the projected alliance. Anything for a title. But I suppose that is as it should be. All is fish that comes to her net by way of variety. Republican money against aristocratic blood."

The next day in the street Mrs. Dudleigh was jostled against a tall, Apollo Belvidere of a man, who bowed off from her with profuse apologies. But not before she had had time to wonder where she had seen that face before.

It did not recall the younger, comparatively boyish face of Charlie Dudleigh, and yet it suggested him. But this man was much more broad-shouldered; he was bronzed; his features were heavier. And yet, in a flash, Nora felt that a recognition had passed between herself and the stranger. He knew her for Nora O'Halloran. And he—could he be Charlie, who had grown up with her and had been as her brother?

That night Geoffrey came home unexpectedly early from his dinner-party.

"I do not think the Shuttlecock-Stanhope match will come off," he said. "It was a pity, as far as the groom prospective was concerned, that I was asked to the dinner."

"Geoffrey! You have not seen your brother?"

"How did you guess?"

"Because I saw him in the street to-day. It seems now that it must have been in a dream—except that what you say confirms my vision. Did you recognise each other?"

"Publicly? Heaven, no! But in the course of conversation he announced, for my benefit I suppose, that he was off for Salt Lake to-morrow. I suppose he dreaded exposure from me. And he was right. I should never have allowed him to marry that girl. Poor little thing! I am afraid she cares for him. He is just the kind of swaggering villain that ignorant women fancy. And he is extremely handsome. One girl said to me to-night, 'The handsomest man in Europe, Mr. Dudleigh.' Now how do you suppose he circulated such a report as that about himself? Of course he does his own advertising. Who else is there to do it for him?"

"You are sure he is going?"

"Morally certain. When he announced this intention I fixed my eyes upon him, and he had the grace to blush. He was thoroughly discomposed. Oh, yes, he is going. By the way, the conversation turned upon you. Shuttlecock proclaimed, in his pompous way, that you were the handsomest woman in Chicago. Lord Alfred was in the midst of an animated conversation at the time, but he stopped directly and listened undisguisedly. 'Your cousin, I think I have heard you say?' Mr. Shuttlecock proceeded. 'Yes,' I replied, as distinctly as possible, 'my cousin. We were brought up under the same roof.' At that Lord Alfred's hand shook so that the glass of wine he held fell to

the ground. There was the merest ripple on the surface of the table-talk in consequence, but I felt I had dealt the fellow a blow, and I rejoiced at his discomfort.

"Oh, Geoffrey, Geoffrey! Your own mother's son!"

"Oh, Nora, Nora, a mere vulgar impostor. Think of it! He comes to this place under an assumed name. He cheats honest people. Could anything be more flagrant, more disgraceful? My blood boils within me. I question whether I am justified in allowing such an outrage to go on unmolested, such an ulcer to continue to fester society. The only consolation is that such a course must of necessity be soon run; his glaring imposition will be found out. The Duke of Northumberland indeed! But I imagine he changes his name with every change of habitation."

"I feel so sorry for him," repeated Nora, dismally. "Oh, Geoffrey, see him! Expostulate with him!"

"I have washed my hands of him," protested Geoffrey.

Nevertheless, the next day Geoffrey did send his way to the hotel where Lord Alfred Stanhope's aristocratic quarters were established, but the scion of a ducal house had departed by an earlier train than he had announced. He had left an address, however, and to this address Geoffrey wrote forthwith, in such a strain as was suggested to him by the view his wife took of his erring brother.

But his letter was returned to him. Lord Alfred Stanhope never arrived at Salt Lake City. Other letters addressed to his lordship there met with the same fate as Geoffrey's. He left numerous creditors in Chicago, none of whom succeeded in tracing the noble lord beyond Omaha.

From that point his wanderings were wrapped in uncertainty. It was useless to vent any natural rage in expletives and indignation. It was an accomplished fact that Lord Alfred Stanhope had disappeared from view. Moreover, the noble English family to which he claimed to belong disowned any connection with anyone answering his description, when appealed to through business men.

There was nothing left but to accept the situation as best the angry creditors might, drawing from their sad experience the moral not to stake their faith so readily again upon a fair outside show, a handsome face, good manners and good dressing.

But from the day that Lord Alfred Stanhope thus disappeared from Chicago the thought of her unhappy Cousin Charlie never ceased to haunt the heart of Mrs. Geoffrey Dudleigh. He preyed upon her mind and heart in fact; as was natural, for to her woman's nature he represented the wandering sheep over whom every true woman's soul yearns in pity.

It happened the next summer that Mrs. Dudleigh's health required change of air. The physician urged that she should spend six months at least by the sea shore.

Her husband accompanied her to Newport, established her there, and then returned to Chicago, where his business interests rendered it imperative that he should remain.

Mrs. Dudleigh went to work conscientiously to recruit her health. Life meant a great deal to her now.

She made friends by the score—she was a woman to make friends—but among those friendships she now formed none was more congenial to her than Geraldine Waring's, a bright, beautiful girl who, to use her own phrase, fell desperately in love with Nora Dudleigh at first sight, and pursued her with her devoted attentions.

She was a girl of about twenty, ardent, enthusiastic, inconsiderate. It was impossible to resist her, even had Nora not been glad enough to welcome her every day to her cottage and listen to her long romances and rhapsodies and theories about people and things.

"Do you know why I first took a fancy to you?" the girl said, one day, throwing herself on the floor beside her friend, and resting her head on her lap. "It was because you are Eng-

lish." Then suddenly, "Did I ever show you this?" and she produced a likeness in a velvet case from her pocket, which she put into Mrs. Dudleigh's hands.

Nora recognised the handsome, reckless face in an instant—more like the face that had flashed upon her for a moment out of the crowd in Chicago than the boy she had known of old.

The face held no longer its fresh, young comeliness; it had lost the look of frankness inherited from an honest ancestry, and it had become written over with its sins.

But of this Geraldine had no thought. It was simply to her the most beautiful face in the world. She gazed at Nora as Nora gazed at Charlie, and thought sad thoughts—gazed as though she were trying to read her opinion. Nora gave her back the picture with a forced smile.

"Who is it, dear?"

"Charles Pelham Norton—Lord Charles Pelham Norton. He was in New York early in the spring. He is coming here next month. You will see him. You will be friends," Geraldine declared, in her autocratic way. "Here is his card," she added, taking out her dainty white card-case, and handing it to Nora. Beneath the name was written, in Charlie's well-known writing, "For Miss Waring, with kind inquiries."

"I had been ill. He sent me some flowers," explained Geraldine, taking back the card tenderly and replacing it in her card-case with a lingering touch.

As Nora said nothing she went on pressing the point.

"What do you think of him?"

"He is very handsome. As handsome a man as I have ever seen." Then Nora stroked her friend's hand gently. "You like him—especially?"

"Better than anyone else in the world."

Then Nora's heart sank within her. What could she say? She knew that these Waring were very rich people. She had no doubt that Charlie had laid a well-planned plot in which to ensnare his victim.

Perhaps it only depended upon herself to frustrate it. And yet how could she? Oh, if she only had never come to Newport! Here was Geraldine clinging to her, loving her, and yet she in return hesitated to warn her of the abyss that was yearning before her feet!

"Papa did not altogether fancy him at first," Geraldine pursued. "He knew a rather fast set of young men in New York. That was because he has a perfect passion for horses—in an innocent, gentlemanly way of course—only somehow it seems as though people who like horses are always associated with disreputable characters. It seems a pity, doesn't it? But afterwards he brought letters to papa and papa felt dreadfully at having done him such an injustice. The truth is they got up some story about his being the image of a dreadful adventurer out West who cheated people and made off with their money, and ran away with their daughters. Pelham had a good laugh about it when we all talked it over in the family afterwards. Oh, papa and mamma liked him enormously in the end—mamma especially, she thinks he is so thoroughly aristocratic."

"Are you engaged to him?"

"Yes, yes. That is what I told you. He is coming here next month. We shall be married then."

"I should like to see him when he comes," Nora Dudleigh said, slowly, on the inspiration of the moment.

"Yes, of course. I mean to bring him to see you. I told you just now that I was positive you would be great friends. There's something about you—I don't know what it is—which always makes me associate you two together. You don't look alike and yet you remind me of each other."

Nora shrank unconsciously. Was this girl finding out her secret? Was there no such thing as hiding away their family disgrace? For herself she did not care, but she knew how her husband's proud heart was wrung

by the knowledge that his brother disgraced daily his ancestry by every act that was vile and atrocious.

Geraldine looked at her in a puzzled way. She had never thought that this sweet, gentle Mrs. Dudleigh was odd before. She confessed she thought so now.

The next day Geraldine brought her a letter of her lover's to read. Nora read it thoughtfully with the desire which comes to many of us in such an emergency to read between the lines. But she could make but little of the hurried scrawl.

It was not a letter which would have satisfied her from a lover. It was full of himself—of his rides, his drives, his billiards, his dances. What was there in all this for a girl like Geraldine Waring to love?

It overcame Nora with a throb of hope that perhaps the girl loved an ideal after all; the outside man who, when all was said, was goodly, tall, and fair. She read the letter twice, re-folded it, and handed it back to Geraldine, noting the address.

To that address she wrote that very day, sending off her letter with a dull heartache, and feeling the next time she met Geraldine as though she had been conspiring against that poor child's peace, for in her letter to Charlie she had implored him to abandon his pursuit of Miss Waring. She had spoken of her as an innocent young thing, the happiness of whose whole life would be blasted if he persisted in marrying her. She signed the letter with her own name.

There was a chance that she had made a mistake and that Charles Pelham Norton was not Charles Dudleigh, but on this point there was very small doubt in her own mind.

Had she made a mistake, and if the man Geraldine Waring was going to marry was the honourable gentleman she had believed him to be, he would return her letter and regard its disclosures as sacred. On the other hand, if her suspicions were correct, what would be the upshot of the matter?

She was not left long in doubt. At the latest hour when it was possible to arrive in Newport, Charles Dudleigh arrived there, and proceeded at once to Mrs. Dudleigh's under cover of the darkness.

He found her in and alone. An interview more painful it would be difficult to imagine. He revived all the memories of the past. He accused Geoffrey and herself of having made him what he was. He upbraided her with desiring now to wrest from him his last lingering hold on respectability.

"A good, loving girl is willing to marry me—"

"But she is not willing to marry you," interrupted Nora, quivering with excitement. "She does not know you. She is a noble, generous girl. I believe in my soul that were she left to her own choice she would marry you, and cover your transgressions with the ample mantle of her love, but you have not given her the opportunity. She believes she is marrying a noble lord of unblemished reputation instead of—"

"A forger and a swindler—I'll say it for you."

"It cannot be that you love her. If you did you would never dream of doing her this wrong."

"I never loved but one woman in my life, and that woman has sent me to destruction."

Poor Nora! Her conscience was weak in her own defence. It seemed to her as he upbraided her that she had done him some hideous wrong. Perhaps it was as he said, but it had been ignorantly. Her heart cried out to God that it had been ignorantly. She had acted for the best all the while. She looked up at Charlie imploringly.

"I would have saved you if I could," she cried, with sobs and tears.

"Saved me?" cried Charles Dudleigh. "Yes, I know what that means. I know how small and narrow and confined your pity ever was. You always subordinated me to your own wishes

—loves—ambitions. I was a poor younger brother."

"It is useless to discuss the past."

"Utterly so. I have done. Now listen to me. I defy you. I have almost consummated this marriage. I am nearer my goal now than I have been for years. If you thwart me, expose me, I swear that I will die then and there by my own hand, as soon as you expose me; and my blood will be on your own head. I leave the issue to you—I dare you to do your worst."

He left her with this fearful responsibility on her hands. He was her husband's brother—her own near kinsman. And he meant what he threatened. Had she the courage to save even her dear Geraldine against the price of blood he had staked on the frustration of his plans? Nora's heart failed her. She could not sign his death-warrant by writing to Geraldine that she had been basely deceived by the man she had promised to marry.

But it is in man's extremity that it is borne in upon him that God in such crises makes His opportunities. There was nothing but disaster and mortification all around poor Nora. Her heart failed her for fear.

She felt, for the first time in years, so powerless that she wanted to lie down and die. Yes, all the good things of life that had come to her were as nothing in comparison with the humiliation that this had befallen her with which she was unable to cope.

She accused herself of cowardice—of detestable moral cowardice; but self-accusations left her nothing that she found her. She sat down overwhelmed in the ashes of her failure and of her disappointment.

The next day the wrath of Heaven overtook the poor wretch who had parted from her in impotent defiance. There was a terrible accident on the South steamer. The body of the so-called Lord C. Pelham Norton was among those found and identified afterwards.

Still later his lying life was shown up to the public, but never to the poor girl he had deceived. The truth was mercifully kept from her. She believes in him still. She is one of that lesser army of unhappy women whose idols never having been shattered before their eyes are less miserable in mourning them dead than are those of their sisters whose shattered idols shame them living.

So the great cloud over Nora Dudleigh's life lifted, although it only lifted to disclose the figure of death. But she, with me, holds that death is sometimes a lighter evil of the two.

Nora rejoined her husband in the autumn, and went back to the placid life he had made for her.

Their dream of going back to Ireland is not yet fulfilled, but in my prophetic vision I see that it will be yet. She and her husband are of those who in their patient courage inherit the earth.

NOBLE AT LAST;

OR,

THE HEADSMAN OF ROUEN.

(AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.)

CHAPTER XVI.

FOES IN THE DARK.

In presenting a sealed packet, which he drew from the bosom of his leathern jerkin, the messenger bowed and said:

"My lord, the Dauphin of France, ordered me to wait while you read his gracious missive, and to then hear anything you might wish to say."

Gaultier sharply scrutinised the messenger while receiving and opening the packet, and hastily mastered its contents.

"What can I say or do but submit?" he cried, bitterly, crushing the letter in his hand. "Monseigneur le Dauphin merely condescends to in-

form me that he has thought best to persuade his majesty, the king, not to accept my resignation. There is nothing more."

"I am instructed, Sir Executioner," said the messenger, with mock respect, "to say that his excellency, the dauphin, is chiefly concerned for your own good fortune, whose prospects he will not have you ruin by resigning your lofty and esteemed position."

"Indeed! And pray what else did his excellency condescend to say?" cried Gaultier, angrily, for he had quickly detected the mocking tone that had been presumed upon by the man.

"Only, Sir Executioner, that, since your matrimonial success in high life, you could still less afford a relinquishment of your own advancement in your high and honourable calling than before your marriage."

"Sirrah, thou liest!" exclaimed Gaston, with less of fury, however, than of cold and threatening scorn. "Such may have been the purport of his message, but never such his language. I have been of personal service to Prince Louis, and he holds me in respect and honour. But no matter. Begone!"

"Pardon, sir," said the messenger, suddenly abashed out of his effrontery.

"Nay; I will satisfy myself," said Gaultier, icily now. "I shall write to Prince Louis. Besides acquiescing in his will concerning my resignation, I will merely mention the language in which his messenger reports to me his gracious wishes."

"Oh, sir, have mercy!" cried the messenger, now thoroughly terrified. "Perhaps I have not repeated his exact words—I have a miserable memory—but I swear I meant no disrespect, sir."

"There you belie yourself again, but I will be equally merciful to your braggadocio as to your cowardice, provided you answer me truly concerning yourself," said Gaultier, coolly seating himself while leaving the other standing, and continuing to eye him closely.

The messenger was a short, stout man, whose rascally disposition was made apparent by his sinister, hang-dog countenance, in spite of his smart courier's costume of buff jerkin, high, heavily-spurred jackboots, and plumed cap, which latter he was now dangling nervously in his hands.

"Anything you desire to know, master," he replied, piteously.

"What is your name then?"

"Laurent Madrin."

"Whose interests do you secretly look after while pretending to be solely in the dauphin's service?"

"Really, monsieur, is it likely that—"

"Ay, anything accords with such rascality as thine! Speak! But a brief period ago you were one of the henchmen of Hugo de Borne?"

The messenger flushed but did not venture upon a denial.

"Give free and open answer, or I will have thee scourged by the dauphin's orders!" said Gaultier, pitilessly.

"Yes, yes; it is true!" gasped the courier, trembling violently.

"And you are still secretly attached to the Sieur de Borne?"

"Yes."

"Is he here in Rouen now?"

"He is."

"In your secret service for him have you lately held communication with Bertrand de Chanzy?"

"Yes; while he was at Malmaison."

"What was the nature of your communications with him? Conceal nothing, on your peril."

"I will tell all, sir. The messages were forwarded to the viscount by Hugo, through me. They were written in a disguised hand, and purported coming from a secret friend. They tended to lure him from his retreat in Gascony to this city, and here to commit some breach of the law."

"In what way?"

"You know the severe edicts against duelling without the royal sanction. Perhaps the secret missives were to goad him on to such a duel."

"But what could bring him here to Rouen?" said Gaultier, smiling; and then, perceiving

fresh hesitation in the other, he added, with renewed sternness: "Once more I warn you against prevarication in your replies. Answer!"

"I will do so," replied the courier, more boldly. "It has been constantly and persistently represented to the Viscount de Chanzy that the fair lady, your wife, suffers imprisonment, torture and brutal treatment at your hands. He is now here, first to satisfy himself that this is so, and then to carry her off."

"Enough. Yet stay. Is Hugo de Borne himself in Rouen now?"

"He is; he perhaps watches your house as jealously as does the viscount himself."

"I understand; and for a widely different purpose," said Gaultier, grimly. "You can depart now, Laurent, and I shall say nothing to the dauphin."

The courier hastily departed, as if very glad to do so.

He had scarcely disappeared before there was a light, familiar tap at the door, which made Gaultier's face burn like a girl's, and then his wife entered. She was very animated, and her glowing cheeks and eyes were expressive of pleasure.

"I want you to forgive me, Gaston," said she, taking his hand, with a smile.

"Before I know your fault?" he asked, drawing her to him, and acting with secret delight that she did not shrink, even laughingly, from the kiss which he imprinted on her brow.

"Perchance it was a slight one," she replied.

"Not knowing that you were here, I entered my bed chamber there by the garden door, and overheard the beginning of your interview with the prince's courier."

"Only the beginning?"

"Yes; for when he grew impudent and you stern in rebuke, I recollected myself, and withdrew from further eavesdropping. But, ah! your resignation; I overheard about that."

"It is not accepted; I must submit."

"Why did you not confide to me that it had been sent?"

"In order to be sure of its acceptance before giving you what I hoped would prove a pleasant surprise."

"Oh, indeed?"

She had long secretly desired him to do as he had done, even to the sacrifice of his most cherished hopes of perishment and reward. He had anticipated her wish.

"But its non-acceptance cheats me both of my purpose to resign and my intention to afford you pleasure," said he, with a sigh.

"But you have shown me how good and kind you are," said Gabrielle, impulsively offering her forehead to another kiss. "I thank you, Gaston; I thank you from the bottom of my heart!"

Her husband was charmed. Never before had she been so responsive to his timid caress. Was love then, real love, beginning to mingle with her esteem? His heart gave a joyful leap, and he offered to fold her into a passionate embrace; but she broke away from him, as coyly as ever, though with no displeasure in her blushes.

"Thank you again, Gaston; but I must return to the garden, where Celestine and Marie are setting out some new rose-bushes for me," she cried, slipping away; and she ran out of the room, with a laugh.

A baffled and only half-pleased look remained upon Gaultier's face.

"Not yet, not yet! Ah! when will I know that she loves, loves, loves me?" he murmured; and, heaving a deep sigh, he returned to his study.

He remained there until late in the afternoon, when Raoul returned with his report. The page had pushed his inquiries industriously, and was now full of minute particulars of information. His master listened to them rather abstractedly, however, for, except apprising him that the secret watch upon the oriel had lasted much longer than was at first supposed, they did not add materially to the information he had already received so unexpectedly from the courier. However, his views were now somewhat altered concerning the intentions of the young viscount's secret advisers.

The laws that had of late been enacted against duelling except by royal privilege were very strict and severe. Might there not be an inten-

tion to embroil the unfortunate Bertrand in an altercation with Hugo himself, in case of failure to effect a hostile meeting between the viscount and the husband of Gabrielle?

"After supper this evening, Raoul," said Gaston after listening to his page's report and complimenting him upon his assiduity, "you will watch the garden gate until the household retires to rest."

"And allow no one to approach the house?" cried the page, with an inquisitiveness of which he was seldom culpable.

His master frowned.

"On the contrary, for the express purpose of lulling the porter to negligence, and permitting no one to be deterred who might chance to enter the garden or house unceremoniously," said he, sternly. "See that the street door is also left ajar."

He made a sign of dismissal, and Raoul departed with his customary obedience, but full of wonder.

Soon after the lamps were lighted that evening Gabrielle and her husband occupied the tapestried saloon, as usual.

CHAPTER XVII.

PUT TO THE TEST.

THE weather had changed during the day, and the evening was dark and windy, with indications of an approaching storm.

Gautier was seated beside a small table, with a book in his hand, which he was only pretending to read. His eyes were frequently rested upon the bright head of his wife than upon his book. She was seated upon a low divan, almost at his feet, lightly touching the strings of a lute that she held in her lap with a listless, pensive air, and with her bowed head glistening in the rich lamplight.

Presently a slight sensation of chilliness caused her to look up, and she perceived that the great oriel window was even more widely uncurtained and open to the night air than usual.

"Shall I shut out the air?" said her husband, quick to notice her every movement.

"No, it is rather fresh than cool," she replied. "But are not the curtains wider apart to-night than usual?"

"Perhaps so; but can you apprehend observation from outside?"

And though he laughed as he said this, he narrowly eyed her. Love is ever jealous, if jealousy is not always the fruit of love; and he may be pardoned for wishing to assure himself that she was perfectly unsuspecting of the envious, stealthy gaze which he felt was being directed upon them from across the way.

"Certainly not; even the stars are hidden now, and there have never been any other eyes to watch us here," she replied, with a smile so childlike and sweet that he was ready to curse himself for even the momentary doubt that had entered his mind.

"Will it discomode you to sit a little nearer to the table, and then sing me something to your lute?"

"That is but a slight request," she replied. "What shall I sing?"

She arose as she spoke, and he placed her cushioned seat not only nearer the table, but in a position that he knew would afford a more complete, uninterrupted view of her to the watcher from the opposite house. Then, when she was again seated, he drew his own chair directly behind her, so that her bowed head almost touched his knees, and when his glance was not resting upon her it was roaming out into the darkness of the night.

At such times his face wore a peculiarly challenging smile, as it were. In fact, though Gabrielle was of course unconscious of anything of the kind, he was posing for a purpose; he was arranging a domestic tableau for the special benefit, or special misery, of the invisible watcher across the way.

He was willing, even anxious, to precipitate

any test of his wife's feelings toward him that might arise; and, so weary was he of doubt and suspense, to abide by the result, whatever it might be.

"What shall I sing for you?" she said again, looking up into his face.

"That little Provencal song, called 'The Test of Love,' if you have no objection."

"Why should I object? Only pray do not disarrange my hair," said she, with a little toss of her head; and she at once began to play and sing.

Gaston listened attentively, but looked steadily out of the window into the night as she sang, and with a smile of satisfaction upon his lips.

He had purposely taken a slight liberty with her head-dress, which she had resented good-naturedly enough, but with a gesture that might well have been mistaken for one of anger and contempt by an observer from some distance.

Gabrielle had a sweet, clear, well-cultivated voice, well suited to the gentle pathos of the little troubadour's ditty, which she sang from beginning to end.

"Beautiful, beautiful," said her husband, bending fondly over her. "Would that it were indeed the Test of Love for you and me!"

She looked up with surprise as well as pleasure, but before her lips could frame an answer there was a sound of the front door being burst open with a great clamour; then heavy footsteps echoed through the hall, and as Gabrielle started to her feet in dismay the door of the saloon was hurried wide, giving unceremonious entrance to a tall, heavily-cloaked man, who put the climax to his rudeness by closing and locking the door behind him.

"This is an unwonted liberty, sir stranger!" exclaimed Gautier, though rising from his chair with singular deliberateness. "Who are you that thus intrude so rudely?"

"I am Bertrand de Chanzy," replied the newcomer, haughtily, and casting aside his cloak he advanced towards Gautier with an imperious air.

Gabrielle uttered an exclamation of astonishment and grief, in which her husband could hardly refrain from joining, so great was the change that had taken place in the young noble.

His frame, at one time the very incarnation of youthful strength and symmetry, was greatly emaciated, and the rich costume that covered it was neglected and soiled.

His hair and beard were disordered, his features were white, haggard and drawn, as though permanently aged; and his great eyes, whose blackness was rendered more striking by the death-like pallor of his skin, were illumined as by the fires of approaching insanity.

But, pitiable wreck as he was, his bearing had lost none of its lofty scorn, none of its old imperiousness.

"I am Bertrand de Chanzy!" he repeated, misled as to the effect produced by his ghastly appearance. "You, sir, have cause enough to remember me. Gabrielle, I am here to save you!"

And he turned toward the executioner's wife with both hands extended, and his white face quivering with emotion.

Gabrielle had risen now and was leaning pale and trembling for support on the back of a chair. For a moment pity, supreme commiseration, usurped the place of every other feeling in her breast.

At Bertrand's cry and gesture she tottered impulsively toward him, and laid both of her hands in his.

But when he made a motion to fold her to his heart she sternly repulsed him. He seemed not to comprehend the meaning of her gesture, and contented himself with pressing her hands wildly to his lips, and still retained them in his grasp.

"Oh, Gabrielle! my innocent, suffering, beautiful dove, didst thou think I had deserted thee?" he cried, with passionate fervour. "No, illness alone has kept me from rushing to thy

rescue! Norman, nor fate, nor death itself, shall part us more! Think not that I blamed thee, after the first burst of anguish, my beloved, that thou didst choose so horrible a sacrifice rather than to face the cruel doom to which they strove to hunt thee down. What months of suffering these must have been that thou hast passed under this roof—with him! My heart bled for thy misery, Gabrielle, although my palsied arm was then too weak to strike a blow for vengeance and for thee. But its strength has returned, and this night, Gabrielle, thou shalt be saved!"

He suddenly dropped her hands and turned furiously upon Gautier, at the same time unsheathing his sword.

"Draw, Sir Hangman!" he cried. "The time has come for one or both of us to die!"

Gautier had remained standing like a statue with his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes fastened upon Gabrielle's face, studying its faintest expression with a fixed, devouring agony that was oblivious to all else.

It is doubtful whether he had heard his rival's words, so searchingly intent was he in reading their effect upon his wife.

"Draw, I say!" repeated the viscount, apparently still more infuriated at his indifference. "You are—no matter by what foul means—the husband of this lady. Therefore I, Bertrand de Chanzy, knight and noble of France, will deign to cross swords with you, the Executioner of Rouen. Should you fall, she will once more be free; should you be victor, I shall at least have died in a vain effort to save her."

Gabrielle uttered a low cry, and placed her hand upon De Chanzy's arm.

"You rave! You are under an illusion!" she murmured, with a gentle, beseeching glance at her husband which caused him to suddenly raise his head and heave a long breath, as though a mighty burden had been lifted from his heart and soul.

"Fear not, my beloved!" cried Bertrand, still misapprehending her looks and manner, and turning to her with a proud, yet tender smile. "Thy Bertrand's sword hath seldom failed him yet. 'Twill not be likely to prove recreant now."

He turned once more to Gautier, who, almost as if ignorant of his presence, still kept his eyes upon his wife's face.

"You have not drawn, sir!" shouted De Chanzy. "What means this delay?"

Drawing a long breath Gaston now for the first time regarded him.

"Put up your sword," said he, calmly. "I am your superior as a swordsman, as you have proved. There is no need of the sword's arbitration here. It is simply left for the lady to choose between us."

Gabrielle turned paler than before. She felt what was imposed upon her, if the mad viscount did not.

(To be Continued.)

A WOMAN'S ADVICE, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

"HATEFUL stuff. I can't understand it. And—I won't try."

The words were spoken in a dogged tone by a girl of sixteen—a girl in a frayed and faded blue flannel dress, with short, black hair and a pair of intelligent but utterly ill-natured eyes. She had folded her arms and pushed back her books with the air of a creature at bay.

"If you will be patient a moment, Miss Delemater, I will try to make it clear," said the young man sitting opposite her.

He spoke with masculine self-restraint, not quite free from desperation.

The two were sitting on either side a library table strewn with school books, in a book-lined room. It was a sombre room, with a thick, dull-coloured carpet, on which the steps sank noiseless, with heavy shadows in the spaces

above the shelves, with dark, sinister bronzes on pedestals, and here and there a marble figure as startling as a ghost.

A student might have loved the room, but it was a gloomy place for a sun-and-wind-loving girl; and a window, set in the wall as a picture might have been hung, giving a glimpse of smooth, clear water, greensward, and drifting yellow leaves, only made the oppression of the indoor surroundings greater by contrast.

Phyllis Delemater, with gloomy, indignant eyes, sat facing this window, looking past the young man before her into the dreamy, gold-coloured outer air. She leaned forward with her arms crossed upon the table. They were well-made arms, one would observe, and the short, frayed flannel sleeve did not disguise the curves of the little brown hand and strong, graceful wrist.

The man formed an exasperating contrast to the girl, his pupil. Handsome, at his ease, dressed with negligent elegance, in mourning, he had the air of one being more accustomed to the forms and usages of good society than to the business at which he found himself.

"I shall not be patient, Mr. Brett. I don't wish it made clear, even if you could make it so. I have decided not to be educated."

She kept her eyes persistently on the scene outside.

"I am afraid," he said, rather mockingly, "that I do not do my part as I ought. If I did, I suppose you would not feel so."

"I can't say, I'm sure."

"I suppose I might have made it easier for you," with sudden compunction and a slight anxiety.

"Perhaps," doggedly, "I might have made it easier for you."

"I had no right to expect you to put yourself out. I am working for pay."

She straightened herself.

"Well, Mr. Brett, I have done with you."

If she had not been so young and out of humour, the words would have been insulting. He coloured, as it was, at her coarseness.

"My contract is with your father, Miss Delemater. I shall have to have my dismissal from him," he said.

"I have nothing to do with my father's contracts—nothing whatever. I have tried education for a month. I give it up. I am going to live my life as the ignorant, clumsy thing I am. I don't want to improve."

He was only twenty-two. He could not be expected to turn philosopher. Besides, he was half glad, despite his need of a situation, to escape from this drudgery. He had completed his college course only a few months earlier, and he found his pupil very dull.

"I am sorry—" he began.

"You are not sorry. You are glad. You hate me, you show it in every look. My stupidity disgusts you—"

"Miss Delemater," he interrupted, "you have shown such an aversion to me that I have not had a fair chance. I agreed to give you four hours' instruction daily. Perhaps, if you think, you may realise that to make up those hours I have had to put myself at your service from breakfast-time till supper time. You have given me a half-hour, quarter of an hour, as you saw fit, and left me to wait for the next. I have been conscientious, if I have not been successful. I have allowed myself no liberty. I think it is unfair for you to make the charges you do."

She looked at him with amazement. He was touched—this automaton, whose superiority she had resented so—touched by her. Hard as she had tried to annoy him, he had never lost his temper before.

She had come to feel that he was adamant. But she had touched him now. And how? By perverse injustice. His position put him in her power, and she had abused it. It was not a very noble thing to have done.

She stared into his face as the thoughts spun through her brain. Then she buried her face in her hands.

"I am too—oo miserable," she cried, with passion. "I won't live. I won't stand it."

Marriage, which it is said is but an episode in the life of man, had been an unusually brief episode in Hugh Delemater's. It was a hasty marriage, outside his sphere, and his wife's death terminated it after a twelvemonth. By one of the mischances of fate—fate which had been so kind otherwise to Mr. Delemater—she left a baby behind her, a girl baby, which appeared to the man, whose only domestic ideas were derived from studies of the Holy Family on costly canvases, to be unduly gifted as to lungs and eyes.

Now Mr. Delemater's small but elegant home was not adapted to accommodate a baby. The mere idea of a baby with its nursing-bottle and nurse in the midst of his Pompeian dados and Agra rugs was absurd, to say nothing of the intrusion of a cradle and an old woman in a cap into a society which drank costly wines and dined in full dress.

The thought that Mr. Delemater could bring up his baby was not abandoned, because it was never entertained. In the emergency of bereavement and surprise connected with the baby's becoming an established fact someone remembered that the child had a grandmother.

The funeral week, with its yards of white lute-string and masses of tuberose and lilies, afforded time to ascertain that the old lady, in her quiet Berkshire home, would be glad to care for her dead daughter's child.

How suitable! how expedient! Fate was still kind. In a brief interview with his lawyer Mr. Delemater fixed a comfortable annuity upon the guardian of his child, who proved to be in modest circumstances.

A nurse and physician were entrusted to see the morcel unduly proportioned as to lungs and eyes to its journey's end, and then Mr. Delemater dismissed the matter from his mind for sixteen years.

Those had been enjoyable years to Hugh Delemater. Busy with his politics, with his bric-à-brac, with distinguishing and amusing himself, it was supposed that he had forgotten the very existence of his little girl.

Rich, fastidious, and free, admired and courted, a critic in music and art, an authority in etiquette and fashion, it is easy to understand that a homely little girl running wild among the pastures was not an object likely to intrude itself upon his interest.

It was a sultry morning of early September at the end of those sixteen pleasant years. Mr. Delemater was at his country seat entertaining a small party of friends. The late breakfast was recently over, and host and guests occupied the broad piazza shaded by fine old trees, beyond which the rippling river shimmered in the sun.

They were very nice-looking people—these friends of Mr. Delemater's. A couple of the younger men wore bicycle suits; a group were discussing the merits of the latest literary sensation.

A pale, handsome young fellow in deep mourning stood apart with an air of dejection which might have had its cause in the kind of constraint which had suddenly come over a very pretty girl at the approach of an elder woman whom she resembled.

The host, in a velvet coat, with his vandyke beard, was near these and the two or three other ladies who in their white fan-tailed wrappers suggested a flock of fancy doves. All at once there came in sight along the broad, shady road an open waggon with one seat, on which sat two women and a man.

In the back part of the waggon was a paper-coloured trunk with various bags and boxes corded in beside it. There was a look of inquiry directed by the occupants of the piazza towards the approaching party.

"Callers!" suggested Mrs. Rivers, shading her somewhat faded brown eyes with herring-bone hand.

Mr. Delemater surveyed them languidly. They had mistaken their way perhaps, or they

had butter and eggs to sell. He stepped forward to direct them to the kitchen or the road, as the case might require.

The driver of the party appeared in no doubt, however, as to his business. He reined up his horse opposite the piazza with a nasal Whoa! handed the reins to the woman on his right, descended stiffly, whip in hand, surveyed the premises, and said, "Hugh Delemater, I suppose?" to the gentleman who had advanced to send him to his back-door.

"Yes, sir," with affable surprise.

The man turned to the waggon.

"Well, Phyllis, you see I've brought you safe. Here's your pa's house, and that's your pa."

Mr. Delemater at these words proceeded down the steps.

"I thought we'd give you a surprise," continued the spokesman for the travellers. "You see the old lady died a month and more ago. Of course the money stops with her. Some of 'em wrote to you, but they got no answer—eh?"

"I have been from home. I regret—"

"No consequence—none whatever. My wife and me was going on a visit to my brother Samwell's. We heard as you was stopping here just now. So I told Phyllis we'd bring her at once and save railway fare. Neighbours should be neighbours—eh?"

Mr. Delemater had had a good many moments of rapid emotion during his life, but he thought his blood had never flown faster from brain to heart and heart to brain again than while the old farmer, with his stumpy whip in his horny hand, stood making his explanations.

He remembered his courtship, his marriage, the birth, the death. He knew that the dumpy, vulgar-looking girl with the cheap flowers in her hat, with short hair and bare hands, was his daughter. It was so awkward too. It reflected so upon his good taste. He heard, in imagination, Mrs. Rivers describing the scene hereafter, with her mocking brown eyes and her pretty ringed hands playing their part in the description.

It was over at last though! They were brought in, the man bowing stiffly as they filed between the lines of the ruffled doves drawn up to receive them, and his good wife saying "La!" as she took the blue glasses off her surprised eyes.

As for Phyllis Delemater she said not a word. She turned her cheek to her father's kiss. She glared at pretty Pauline Rivers, who ran forward and attempted to say:

"Oh, I am so glad you have come! There isn't anyone of my own age here!"

She had taken in the blunder at a glance. But how should she have known that her father's people were not her people? How should she have known that it was such a stupid mistake to have come?

She felt the cruelty and injustice of the situation as nobody else felt it, and it made her look plainer and more awkward than ever.

It was near noon when Mr. Delemater again presented himself on the piazza. His guests had dispersed—all but one; that one his friend and Mentor, Mrs. Rivers. He was glad it was she whom he had to encounter.

Mrs. Rivers sat in a low chair with the shade of a crimson awning falling across her white dress and a book in her lap; her dainty feet in their bronze slippers and embroidered stockings stretched out and partly covered by her white ruffled train.

Mr. Delemater sank into a chair beside her, and came to the point at a bound.

"In Heaven's name, Gertrude, what am I to do with the girl?"

"My poor boy"—Mrs. Rivers had a touching way of matronising her gentlemen friends—"haven't you room in either of your establishments for a daughter?"

"Pray don't pretend to misunderstand. I have neglected the poor child, and look at her! so absolutely unattractive and—grown up."

"I think you have been neglectful. Now you must make the best of it," with philosophic calm.

"Of course," with as intense irritation as his



['TWIXT FATHER AND LOVER.]

breeding would admit. "That is what I intend to do. The question is how to do it? Shall I send her to school—on the Continent? What shall I do?"

"Oh, you intend to consult me?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, I'll tell you. She must have something to make her forget the past and concentrate all her energies in her future."

"Easy said—"

"She must acquire, observe, control, copy, as if it was a matter of life and death?"

"You are a good theorist."

"And I think the best sort of education for her at present will be a love affair."

"Monstrous!"

"Very likely. But you can't shut a grown-up girl in a dark closet if she won't learn her lesson. Seventeen has to be furnished with a bait that seventeen will catch at. A young man—a gentleman of course—who would touch her fancy will do for her what neither you nor I nor an army corps of educators could accomplish."

"But then—a love affair," mused Mr. Delemater, "is not to be settled in a caucus. And it is like starting a conflagration—you don't know where it will end."

Mrs. Rivers shrugged her shoulders.

"You have let the girl grow up like a Kalmuck. Now you want to revolutionise her nature, spur her, goad her, change the whole current of her thoughts and tastes. How else will you do it?"

"I don't think I could consent to do it in that way. 'Haven't you anything else to suggest?'"

Mrs. Rivers yawned slightly.

"You know we were talking of Theodore Brett last night. I suppose the poor fellow really has no way to turn between now and January. You might engage him as a tutor for Miss Delemater."

"That is a practical suggestion and sounds like yourself. Theodore is fresh from his books; he could teach of course, and no doubt would be glad of the chance. But—I should prefer for the present to leave Phyllis here."

"Leave Theodore here too."

"He could not stand it—here alone."

"There is nothing to prevent his visiting town after school hours every day. It is only an hour's ride."

"True. He might. But then the very thing we were talking of. He might be tempted to make love under the circumstances to a girl who will some day have a fortune."

"And if he should?"

Mr. Delemater knit his brows.

"Theodore is a good boy. But I despise a fortune-hunter, and I've wronged my daughter enough with exposing her to be trapped in such a way."

"I think you need not fear Theodore," said Mrs. Rivers, demurely. "He is head and ears in love with my Pauline."

"But you would not—"

"Of course not. I am not interfering be-

tween them, however, because I think they will outgrow the notion. In a year or two Pauline would no more marry a poor man than I would. Meantime his fancy for my daughter will be your daughter's safeguard, as you see."

"You would make a Minister of State, Gertrude."

"What are international affairs to the settlement of our daughters, Hugh? You underrate my talents."

In the library they sat, therefore, that autumnal day. Mr. Delemater had submitted to the sacrifice of leaving his own tried housekeeper at Waterside. He even affected to believe that he should spend most of his time there. He had the conservatory filled and the furnace repaired, and then he set Theodore Brett to instructing his daughter.

And, meantime, what of the daughter? She had needed only that first day in her father's home to make her sensible of her deficiencies. She saw that she horrified her father, surprised his friends, amused his servants.

A little later she had to make the discovery that Theodore Brett took up the business of educating her because he was poor and while he waited for something better to do, and that he found it very distasteful work.

Hurt, ignorant, helpless, the girl stood at bay. The well-trained servants awed her into a sort of sullen decorum. Miss Milton, the model housekeeper, with her stiff silks and important precision, froze her into awkward silence. With her tutor only, who was so young and too sensitive himself to wilfully hurt her feelings, she dared to vent her passionate homesickness, her gloomy indignation. As far as she had power she visited her sufferings upon him. She affected unreal stupidity; she was unreasonably capricious and unpunctual.

It is not to be denied that poor Theodore had a hard time. He also was having his private quarrel with fate, though he had the good sense to keep it in the background.

A year before he had been courted and petted as the only son of a rich man. One day his father failed. A few days after he died. Theodore was at the end of his senior college year. He found himself helpless, heart-sick, with extravagant tastes and no practical requirements.

Some family friend employed him for a few weeks as private secretary. Mr. Delemater invited him for a fortnight at Waterside, and he was promised a reporter's place on a London daily as soon as a vacancy occurred.

This position as tutor to Miss Delemater was convenient, but it was trying. He knew she was ignorant, and he thought she was proud. She knew he was superior, and she thought he was arrogant.

So for a month the two heart-sore young things struggled on, mutually defiant and thoroughly uncomfortable. It ended, as we have seen, in Phyllis's abrupt and ridiculous dismissal of her tutor.

Mr. Brett was too much annoyed to be sorry for her when she cried.

"We will postpone the algebra till this afternoon," he said, stiffly, rising and walking away.

Phyllis waited till he was out of sight, then she dried her eyes and stole guiltily out of doors. The sky smiled above her. The leaves drifted softly down about her. She ran to the boathouse, and stood watching the ripples as they lapped the bank.

She heard the bell for dinner, but she did not stir. She was not sure that she should ever go back to her tormentors. Perhaps someone would come for her. Well, she would not be captured like a poor little dumb thing. She unlocked one of the boats and pushed off rapidly round a bend in the river.

For all she knew she might have spared herself the trouble of running away. No one, as far as she knew, looked after her or paid the slightest attention to her.

When she returned, toward sundown, to the house Miss Milton was entertaining some friends

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in her own room, and Mr. Brett was gone. Her absence appeared not to have been observed. She was very hungry, but not upon any account would she have ordered lunch. She thought of her grandma's pantry—the loaf of sweet-bread, the bowl of yellow milk, the pure, fresh butter, and she cried again bitterly.

At tea-time, when she and Miss Milton sat down alone together, she asked, fiercely:

"Where is Mr. Brett?"

"He has gone to town—to the theatre. No one can stand this dull place for ever."

"He has not heard my algebra to-day," said Miss Delemater, with haughty disapprobation for once in her tone, and an inward dread that she was to be exposed to her father.

Miss Milton at once resented the young lady's tone.

"Mr. Brett is not obliged to stay at your beck and call from morning till night, Miss Phyllis," she said. "Your father told me that your lessons would usually occupy the morning, and that Mr. Brett would be quite free in the afternoon. This is the first time he has been able to go to town since you began to study with him."

Phyllis was silent. She finished her supper and went to her room. At nine o'clock she heard Miss Milton closing the house; at ten all was silent. Phyllis had been studying. Partly from defiance, partly from repentance, she was determined to recite her lessons that night.

She brushed her thick, short hair vigorously for a minute.

"I wish I had some decent clothes."

She looked at her torn, tumbled dress.

"Nobody cares anything about me, and I am sure I hate everybody," was her rather dejected conclusion, as she took her muddy little boots in her hand and went soddily down the stairs. She knew that Rogers, the butler, would be sitting up to let Mr. Brett in. She was less afraid of Rogers than of the maid-servants. In her stocking-feet, with her candle in her hand, she walked boldly into his lair.

"What time will Mr. Brett be home?"

"About half-past eleven, miss. The train is due at—" in sleepy surprise.

"Very well. I want some supper prepared for him. I shall lay the table in the back parlour. I am going to make coffee on the grate. You may bring in some sandwiches and pickled oysters."

"Yes, miss," said Rogers, quite lifted off his feet, as he afterwards declared. "Coffee on the grate, indeed," was his mental comment, "and it a biling all over the brass fender. A nice mess!"

There are times when destiny seems to delight in piling the last fatal feather on the camel's back. Something like such a feather's weight Theodore Brett brought back to Waterside that night.

It was a couple of chattering girls in the lobby of the theatre who laid the burden on. He stood wedged in the crowd coming out, his crumpled hat drawn down to his eyes, when he heard:

"Theodore Brett was here this evening; did you see him?"

"No."

It was Pauline Rivers who replied.

Theodore's heart thumped at the sound of her voice. Pauline had been the bright particular star of his senior year. It was not a love affair. Mrs. Rivers had been too discreet for that. But just one of those sweet, sentimental friendships, wrapped, like the loves of the gods, in a rose-coloured cloud.

"No," said Pauline.

"What have you done to that poor fellow?" asked her friend.

"Done? Oh, I had to cross him off my list, you know, when he lost his money."

His heart beat harder still with indignation, not with sentiment. He was crossed off the list, eh, because he had lost his money? He straightened himself. More than anything else that had happened to him the words helped to make a man of him.

Rogers opened the hall-door on his arrival.

"Miss Delemater would like to see you, sir, in the back parlour."

The news was old. Brett had seen through the parted curtain as he came up the avenue; had seen the glow from the fire on the wall, and Phyllis's head bent over a book beside the lamp on the centre table. She had waited to apologise. He did not need to be told in order to understand. She was a generous creature after all. He might have understood better than he had her unhappy situation.

"I am shocked to have put you to this trouble," he said, as she was re-arranging the viands to make room for the coffee-pot on the small round table. "But it is very nice."

"I was so rude this morning," in a rapid voice, with burning cheeks, as Rogers disappeared, "I want to recite my lesson before I go to bed. I know the rules perfectly. It will only take a few minutes."

"Miss Phyllis, I have been rude too. I have not done right by you—I think because I too have been unhappy as well as you. You were right this morning. It will be best for you to have another tutor at once."

"No, it will not. Please teach me another week, Mr. Brett, and see how differently I shall behave. I will not detain you in the afternoon. You shall see."

He smiled.

"You are better than I deserve."

She was looking at him rather steadfastly.

"Have you been unhappy? I did not know it."

He told her for the first time something about his affairs—how, having been brought up extravagantly, his father's death had left him almost penniless.

"You and I ought to change places," she laughed. "I was brought up to live in a small, poor way. I should not mind being poor. And you—you are just the one to be rich."

"I am a man, and can earn for myself."

"So could I. It is all I am fit for. I shall never be fit for society—like the ladies I saw when I came here."

He looked at her with surprise, as if he had never examined her before.

"What ails you?"

"I am homely and stupid and awkward."

"Why, I beg your pardon, you are neither one nor the other. You—I think you try to be disagreeable—but there is no need of that."

A shy, happy look came over the girl's face. She was watching him, and she knew he was telling her the truth. Then there was a chance.

"Do you think I could ever satisfy my father?"

"Without doubt."

"Mr. Brett, will you help me to try?"

"May I?"

"If you please."

Theodore Brett had given Phyllis Delemater permission to hope. There is no gift so precious. She looked at herself after that night and believed what he had said. No one is homely and stupid and awkward when one no longer believes that one is so.

It was Theodore who helped her assert herself in the household after that. It was Theodore who, having once awakened her interest, made tasks charming. Every day at dinner-time she said:

"We have finished all our tasks, Mr. Brett; aren't you going into town?"

"It is so pleasant to-day. Shouldn't you like to go out rowing?" was his usual answer.

One day some ladies on board a steam-launch hailed Theodore in the row-boat. Meeting them a day or two after in town they asked:

"Who was that girl you were boating with? She had splendid eyes and magnificent arms."

"That is Hugh Delemater's daughter."

"Indeed! How sensibly she dresses for an heiress."

Rhoda and Theodore laughed over that, for he repeated it to her.

"They could not have seen the darns and tears in this old blue flannel," she said.

Another day when she had done especially well at her lesson, he said:

"You will be as learned as Tennyson's Ide, or Abelard's Heloise, or some other of those famous women."

"Who was Abelard's Heloise?" she inquired. "I will tell you about her this afternoon," he answered.

For some reason, however, the mediæval heroine was forgotten that day, and the next Mr. Brett surprised Phyllis in the library out of school hours. To his still greater surprise she attempted to hide her book.

He had recognised it, however. It was Pope's Heloise. His face flushed and reflected the colour in his pupil's. She had learned more of the old romance than he had intended. It was only the story of the accomplished woman he had meant to tell her, not that of Abelard's passionate mistress.

The two innocent young things looked guiltily into each other's eyes. The picture of those immortal lovers, teacher and pupil, like themselves, had painted itself on their imagination never henceforth to be forgotten.

The fine days of early November were over. The water was too rough for rowing; the wood-paths were wet with rain; the days were short and cheerless. Two of the inmates of the grand house at Waterside, however, found no fault with them.

Phyllis practised drawing and music with her tutor. Her mind expanded like a flower; her form gained in height and symmetry. A passionate, tender light filled her great, dark eyes. A woman, no matter how young, realises and asserts herself as soon as she loves and is beloved. Alas for the women to whom this assertion never comes!

"Your father would hardly know you, Phyllis," Mr. Brett was saying, one twilight. "You are greatly changed."

"Isn't it strange he does not come? He said he should be here once a week at least."

"I did not expect him—and still more I do not want him to come," said the young man.

"Why, Mr. Brett?" in surprise.

"No, Phyllis, I think of his coming with despair. It will destroy the dearest happiness I have ever known."

"I do not understand," she said, with down-cast eyes.

"Yes, you do, Phyllis. You understand well enough that I—"

"Is it possible, Miss Delemater, that you are sitting in the dark?" It was Miss Milton's precise voice that asked the question. "Here is a letter for you. I am astonished that Rogers has not lighted the gas."

"I have told him not to do so until I ring," said the young lady.

Miss Milton said Humph in her heart. Rogers came promptly, and Phyllis proceeded to read the letter, which informed her that her father would be there that evening.

Phyllis little imagined that the visit was due to a precise and somewhat imperative little note penned by Miss Milton, after playing eaves-dropper to a twilight talk between the young lady under her care and the tutor—who, truth to tell, was under her care also.

"I SHOULD not ask you to sit up for me," wrote Mr. Delemater to his daughter, "but my friend, Mrs. Rivers's dressmaker, who is an artist in her line, has consented to go with me to Waterside, that she may look you over and arrange a wardrobe suited to your style. Please, therefore, let me have the pleasure of meeting you on my arrival this evening."

It was past one o'clock. The ladies had retired. Mr. Delemater had lighted his candle when Theodore Brett said, abruptly:

"I have a few words to say, Mr. Delemater, before I can sleep under your roof again."

"My dear boy, you are really sensational," in a somewhat bored tone.

"Mr. Delemater, I have fallen in love with your daughter."

"That is," said the elder man, with sceptical unconcern, "with her fortune."

"I was prepared, of course, for that suspicion," said the tutor, with self-restraint. "At least I hope you will acquit me of abusing your confidence. I have made my confession to you about as soon as I have made it to myself."

Mr. Delemater set down his candle and leaned against the mantelpiece.

"Brett, you're a good fellow. I like you. I mean to help you. But, you understand, no moonshine. I made a dreadful blunder about Phyllis's bringing up. I don't know what I was thinking of. When she landed, as it were, on my hands in September I was bewildered. I thought a little instruction from a well-bred man like yourself would perhaps help to right things with her before thrusting her into a boarding-school or upon the world, where she would be mortified in a way she might never get over. You have done well by her. She is vastly improved for the short time. She appears, I must say, altogether different. I am obliged to you. You shall not go unrewarded for having buried yourself alive for three months here at Waterside. But we will be plain with each other. That you have fallen in love with my daughter is absurd."

"Will you give me a chance to prove my sincerity? Phyllis does not care for your money, Mr. Delemater, and you do not care for her. I—I have seen something of the world, as you know. I am quite sure of myself in this matter. All I ask is that you give me your daughter. I can work for her. I want nothing but herself."

"You mean that you would marry her to-morrow without a penny?"

"If she would have me certainly."

"If she will have you? Then you have not gained her consent?"

"I have not yet asked it. I would not until I had spoken to you."

Mr. Delemater laid his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"That is well. Theodore, let me tell you a secret. A year ago you would not have fallen in love with the young lady you have so summarily selected. There, do not interrupt me. I know just what you would say. We will let the little mistake pass. And I am obliged to take the seven o'clock train to London in the morning. I wish you to accompany me. I have promised some newspaper men, to whom I have spoken of you, that I would bring you into their offices in the course of the day. And now, see the hour. At my age one must be regular. Good night. Breakfast at 6.15 sharp."

And the host waved his hand gracefully, and his daughter's tutor preceded him up the stairs.

When Phyllis came down to breakfast next morning her surprise was keen at finding her father and Mr. Brett gone.

"Did Mr. Brett leave no message about my lessons?" she asked, rather indignantly.

Miss Milton pursed her precise lips.

"The scene is about to change, Miss Delemater. A young lady in your position is supposed to have had enough of a handsome tutor, a row-boat, and twilight tête-à-têtes, at the end of three months."

"Do you mean that Mr. Brett is not coming back?"

Phyllis turned rather pale.

"Perhaps it is as well that he should not, considering that he has a sweetheart elsewhere."

The indignation of the great dark eyes would have terrified some women, but Miss Milton was one of the great unterrified.

"What do you mean?" Phyllis asked, briefly.

"About Mr. Brett's sweetheart? Oh, she was here in the summer; a sweet, pretty girl—Pauline Rivers. Her mother isn't favourable to the match now that Mr. Brett has lost his money. But I suppose if he gets into business, as he expects, this January, she'll feel differently. Mrs. Rivers has two married daughters and three single. They won't all get millionaires."

Poor Phyllis's education had proceeded far enough to teach her that she must not betray her feelings on all occasions. She made no

comment, but the world seemed to have grown suddenly dark.

Nor did the horizon brighten as time wore on. A few days were devoted to dressmaking. Miss Milton was careful to receive the daily mail into her own hands first, and was taken with a sudden taste for winter walks whenever she found Miss Delemater setting off upon one.

One morning Mr. Delemater arrived unexpectedly. He had taken passage for his daughter and himself for the Continent, to start the following day. The town house was closed, and Miss Milton found herself consigned to Waterside for a year or two to come.

There was a brilliant reception in Paris. Walls and staircases massed with plants, soft music, magnificent costumes, a scene enhanced by the numerous beautiful women and distinguished men among the guests.

Mr. Delemater made his appearance in society again that night, after a two years' absence, with his daughter on his arm.

"A dark beauty, in crimson satin, with costly lace," was what the newspaper correspondents said of Miss Delemater. In reality she was the same dark-eyed, simple-hearted girl who rowed with her bare, brown hands with Theodore Brett.

Her father thinks her education was the most fortunate of accidents instead of a blunder. She is a daughter worth having, he says, when she nurses him through his attacks of gout. And she is just as well worth having, he thinks, when she puts on her fine Paris clothes and takes his arm to be seen of the world. Sometimes he feels some concern about her indifference to men and their attentions.

"I shall be gone some day, Phyllis," he says, "and a single woman is—an offence to good taste, my dear."

To which Phyllis replies:

"But, papa, I am only eighteen."

Does he think she has forgotten? Sometimes he suspects that she has not.

He has a little uneasiness this evening at the reception. Someone has mentioned that Theodore Brett was coming, and that they will meet to-night.

Forewarned is forearmed. Mr. Delemater is so devoted to his daughter that evening that he does not leave her when her old tutor comes to greet her.

Perhaps there was no need of his watchfulness. The two meet with constraint. Mr. Delemater redoubled his guard. He saw through the affectation of indifference.

"By the way, Mrs. Rivers is here—with Sophie and Pauline," the young man remarks, at length. "Shall we undertake to find them?"

There was a half-hour's search through the crowd and then it chanced that for a few moments the two girls, Pauline and Phyllis, stood together apart from the group.

Things had changed since the morning when Pauline would have patronised the girl who was a stranger in her father's house.

Phyllis studied Miss Rivers with interest. "So frail, so artificial," she wondered if it could be true that Theodore Brett loved her.

"I am going to be very impertinent," she said, finally; "but a serious matter warrants impertinence sometimes. I am going to ask you a question, Miss Rivers, in confidence. You will do as you see fit of course about answering it. Is Theodore Brett your lover?"

"Theodore—how solemn you are, Phyllis—why don't you call me Pauline? No, Theodore is not my lover."

"Was he ever?"

"Never. That is—years ago—when we went to dancing-school together, we had a boy-and-girl flirtation. He had a rich father then. He was one of the Desirables. But, poor fellow, things changed. Oh, I couldn't think of Theodore now. And for that matter he never thought of me."

"Thanks. You have done me a great favour."

"If you wish to repay it let me look at your dress to-morrow. Worth's make, isn't it?"

"Yes. Certainly."

Mr. Brett was not easily gotten rid of, Mr. Delemater found. He sat beside them at supper. By-and-bye Phyllis set her ice down and said, quietly:

"You left Waterside very abruptly two years ago, Mr. Brett. Why was it?"

"I went at your father's order," to Mr. Delemater's great surprise Theodore replied, with equal composure.

"And you did not bid me good bye before I sailed or send me any word whatever."

"I was forbidden to. I did not flatter myself that you noticed the omission."

She looked at him searchingly.

"You did not?"

"I will not say but that I hoped you did."

"It pained me."

"Miss Delemater, I have respected your father's prohibition for two years. Here in his presence I do not feel bound to respect it longer. I loved you at Waterside. I love you still. I am not mercenary. I would have gladly married you without a fortune when I myself had none. Phyllis"—seeing the swift changes go over her face—"do you care for me?"

She put out her hand. How familiar the curved wrist looked, even in the pale glove.

"For no one else," she whispered.

"And now that I have a fortune too, Mr. Delemater?"

"A fortune too, Theodore?"

"From my uncle, sir."

Mr. Delemater rose and smiled.

"I am a modest man. You two quite shock me. People made love in private when I was young."

"They will do so still, sir, with your permission."

"You are a good boy, Theodore. I will go away."

The relations of tutor and pupil, so abruptly severed, have now merged into a holier tie, and neither Theodore nor Phyllis has reason to regret the fate that threw them together at Waterside.

FACETIÆ.

BADINAGE.

BUTCHER: "Why didn't yer put on a clean collar afore yer left 'ome this mornin'?"

SWEET: "Cause yer mother haven't sent back my dress shirts from the wash this week."

Punch.

A TESTAMENTARY DISPOSITION.

PATER: "Now, my boy, I've been making my will, and I've left a very large property in trust for you. I merely wish to ask you if you've any suggestion to offer?"

SON: "Well, I don't know that I have, sir, unless—hum"—(ponders)—"ques'h'n is—as things go nowadays, wouldn't it be better to leave the property to the other f'lar, and—ah—'ppoint me the trustee?"

Punch.

AN ANTIDOTE.

"Who's that fellow talking to Aunt Julia, and giving himself such awful airs?"

"Oh, Jack! Why, it's Mr. Postlethwaite! He's the greatest poet that ever lived."

"Who told you so?"

"A gentleman called Maudle."

"Well, even if he is, that's no reason he should give himself airs. Look at Russell, now he don't give himself airs, and he's the captain of our fifteen!"

Punch.

NOT THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT HE WOULD.

SMIFKINS: "Well, O'Sullivan, shposh land'sh divided: you get your share—largsh share, o' course—shomboddy sure to shoot you for it. What'sh good, I shay?"

THE O'SULLIVAN: "What'sh good? Begorra! Be jabers! sure, thin, if I was shot, I'd be able to lave it to my ancestors, ye cockney foolsh!"

Fun.

EAR! EAR!

SERVANT: "And please, 'm, when I am out may I call and tell the piano-tuner to come to-morrow? For I notice when you plays as the instrument seems to want tuning very badly." Fun.

A GENTLE HINT.

OUR FRIEND BROWN (who has just opened the carriage door for the young lady to alight): "I beg pardon?"

HAUGHTY BEAUTY: "I didn't speak."

BROWN: "Oh, I beg pardon. I thought you said 'Thank you.'" Fun.

SOMETHING IN THAT.

MOST girls who have the misfortune to be born plain take it much to heart. There is, however, this consolation for the poor dears:—The plainest girl ever born will be, by the time she gets to be seventy years of age, a pretty old one. Judy.

POPULAR SAYINGS PLAYFULLY PUT.

"CHRISTMAS is coming" is a well-known popular saying. What on earth then do people mean when they talk about "Christmas 'waits'?"

"Take care of the pens, and the pounce'll take care of itself," as the thrifty clerk was heard to say.

"Let us be collected," as the fourpenny hits remarked during the offertory.

"I take a mien advantage of you," as the well "got-up" swell said to the poor little snob.

"This is something like a 'tight fit,'" as the gentleman with D. T. was overheard to observe.

"One swallow does not make a summer." Exactly; yet will a gun left off close to one's ear make one spring.

"Early pride will have a fall," as the babe observed the first time it tried to walk alone.

"Never say 'dye I'" as the beau exclaimed to the hairdresser. Judy.

WANTED TO KNOW.

WHETHER, when a person wishes you "the top of the morning," it can be called the height of civility?

Whether a clumsy method of telling crackers may be said to be "Limited Lie-ability"?

Whether tailors are more subject to "fits" than other people?

Whether, if your dentist were to use bad language, he would swear "by Gum"?

Whether the weather will ever leave off being "seasonable," and become endurable? Judy.

'ART NOTES.—Love letters. Moonshine.

DELICATE.

EMMA: "I wish I war a sewing machine."

HARRY: "What for then?"

EMMA: "Why, don't you see? They has a feller and I haven't. There now!"

HARRY: "So do I wish I war a sewing machine."

EMMA: "Raley?"

HARRY: "Yes, I do. Cos why, they're got a Hemmer and I ain't!"

[N.B. They are to be united on Good Friday.] Moonshine.

STATISTICS.

AMERICAN APPLES.—The American apple harvest for last year reached a point which even Americans call big, and which was far beyond that of any previous year. It is calculated the total return reached 200,000,000 barrels, furnished by about 125,000,000 trees. In some parts the trees were laden to the ground, and the wind-falls alone were towards knee-deep. The year is known as "The Apple Year."

GRASS AND TILLAGE LANDS IN IRELAND.—A return, moved for by Lord Cloncurry in the

House of Lords, has been issued, showing the total area of grass lands, including meadows and pastures, and the total area of tillage lands, including all kinds of crops and fallows, in Ireland, for the years 1850, 1855, 1860, 1865, 1870, 1875, and 1880. The returns for 1850 are incomplete, but in 1855 there were 10,872,968 statute acres under grass and 4,436,635 of tillage lands; in 1860 the numbers were—grass, 11,078,152; tillage, 4,411,454; in 1865, grass, 11,501,905; tillage, 3,998,968; in 1870, grass, 11,740,706; tillage, 3,885,945; in 1875, grass, 12,354,005; tillage, 3,399,001; and in 1880, grass, 12,168,933; tillage, 3,186,665.

NEVER MIND WHAT "THEY" SAY.

Don't worry and fret
About what people think
Of your ways or your means—
Of your food or your drink.
If you know you are doing
Your best every day,
With the right on your side,
Never mind what "they" say.

Lay out in the morning
Your plans for each hour,
And never forget
That old time is a power.
This also remember
'Mong truths old and new—
The world is too busy
To think much of you.

Then garner the minutes
That make up the hours,
And pluck in your pilgrimage
Honour's bright flowers.
Should grumblers assure you
Your course will not pay,
With conscience at rest,
Never mind what "they" say.

Too many have loitered
Until the ebb tide,
While seeking opinions
From those at their side.
Too many good swimmers
Have chosen to sink,
Because they are martyrs
To "what people think."

Then let us, forgetting
The insensate throng,
That jostles us daily
While marching along,
Press onward and upward,
And make no delay—
And though people talk,
Never mind what "they" say.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SODA BISCUIT.—One quart of flour, one table-spoonful of lard, one table-spoonful of soda, two teaspoonfuls of cream tartar. Put both in the flour, and wet with sweet milk.

TEA BISCUIT.—One pint thick, sour cream, one teaspoonful soda, one teaspoonful cream tartar. Flour sufficient to roll out, and bake in a quick oven.

HOW TO TELL GOOD EGGS.

A good egg will sink in water.
A boiled egg which is done will dry quickly on the shell when taken from the water.

The boiled eggs which adhere to the shell are fresh laid.

After an egg is laid a day or more the shell comes off easily when boiled.

A fresh egg has a line-like surface to its shell.

Stale eggs are glassy and smooth of shell. Eggs which have been packed in lime look

stained, and show the action of the lime on the surface.

Eggs packed in bran for a long time smell and taste musty.

With the aid of the hands or a piece of paper rolled in funnel-shape and held toward the light, the human eye can look through an egg, shell and all.

If the egg is clear and golden in appearance when held to the light it is good, if dark or spotted it is bad.

The badness of an egg can sometimes be told by shaking it near the holder's ear.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE University Boatrace will take place on Friday, the 8th April. The annual Oxford and Cambridge athletic competitions will be held on Thursday, April 7th. The tide will serve at half-past eight on the 8th.

A LADY who died in St. Albans, Vermont, recently, left five sisters, aged 91, 87, 85, 81, and 73 years.

THE marriage of the Crown Prince Rudolph with Princess Stéphanie of Belgium has been definitely fixed to take place in May next.

INTERESTING new discoveries have been made at Pompeii. A house has been excavated which was in course of construction when the terrible catastrophe occurred, and which differs materially from all other Pompeian houses in its plan.

A GLASGOW paper announces the death of Mrs. Mary McGrogan at the age of 107 years, having been born in 1774. She was a native of county Derry, and possessed all her senses to the last, and was able to do her domestic duties.

THE operative twiners at Oldham, persisting in their determination to remain out on strike, the employers have resorted to the expedient of employing women to do the work. This has taken place in nine instances with considerable success.

PART of the wall of the ancient castle of Launceston, Cornwall, fell down with a loud crash on the afternoon of the 19th ult. There is a considerable portion of the castle which is an almost unique ancient monument left standing. The castle is the property of the Prince of Wales, the heir of the late Colonel Deakin being the present custodian.

A WEEK or two ago the most aged person in Aylth gently closed her life at the extraordinary age of 104 years. Her name was Annie Innes. She had been a domestic servant with the family in whose house she expired nearly the entire period of her life. Deceased went about until within a few weeks of her end. She never was married.

M. DE LESSERS has received a telegram from Panama announcing the commencement of operations at the inter-Oceanic Canal.

It is an odd coincidence that on the 3rd of February, 1769, Wilkes was expelled from the House of Commons. It was on the 3rd of the same month that Mr. Parnell and his friends suffered expulsion.

ANTWERP is the port of the day. During the last 10 years the increase in the tonnage of the ships entering it has been 242 per cent., against an increase of 110 per cent. at Hamburg and 36 per cent. at Liverpool.

GREAT satisfaction is said to have been caused throughout Switzerland by the receipt of a telegram stating that the Swiss watches carried off the highest prizes at the Melbourne Exhibition.

"VACCINATION PARTIES" are the latest novelty in entertainments reported from New York, where the small-pox is now raging frightfully. Dresses with half long sleeves are becoming very fashionable for ball-room wear, even for very young ladies, as almost all the young girls are suffering from the effects of recent vaccination, and none of them cares to unveil to the public view a red and swollen arm marked with a conspicuous if healthy pustule.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS should in all cases furnish us with their names and addresses. Letters signed simply with initials or a nom de plume may not always receive immediate attention, as our space is limited. No charge is made under any circumstances for advertisements appearing on this page.

S. A. D.—The causes of dyspepsia are too numerous to mention. Almost anything which disarranges or debilitates the system may help to bring on dyspepsia. Some of the chief causes are unwholesome food, over-eating, hard drinking, taking one's meals irregularly, and eating too quickly, and continuous exposure to bad air and malarial influences. When the dyspepsia once gets fastened upon a person, in order to get rid of it he must carefully avoid all the above-mentioned things, and take the best possible care of himself under the advice of a competent physician.

A. L.—The term "crony" (or crone) signifies strictly an old and intimate acquaintance—a confidant. It comes from the Teutonic Kronen, to whisper, to tell secrets.

T. O.—Brio-a-brac means a collection of antiquarian or artistic curiosities; chic means assurance or audacity.

R. H. G.—The unfinished structure on the Thames Embankment, which was intended as a National Opera House, is about to be taken in hand and completed as an hotel.

E. B.—The power of lenses, as applied to the telescope, was discovered by a watchmaker's apprentice. While holding spectacle glasses between his thumb and finger he was startled at the suddenly large appearance of a neighbouring church spire.

AN ANXIOUS INQUIRER.—If you were "bound" apprentice you would have to obey the lawful commands of your master: as you are not you are free to decline to serve him at all if so disposed.

ALAN.—We have had no personal experience of the remedial compound you mention, but we should imagine that it cannot be efficacious "in all cases."

Eva's poem is not in our judgment up to the standard for publication.

MANCHESTER.—We opine that "ladies get their fashions" from the dressmakers. There is a book called "Manners and Tone of Good Society," published by Ward and Lock, which would inform you largely on matters of etiquette.

M. C.—One method of cleaning woolwork is as follows: Take four ounces of soft soap, four ounces of honey, the white of an egg, and a wine-glassful of gin; mix well together; the article to be scoured with a rather hard brush thoroughly; afterwards rinse it in cold water, leave to drain, and iron whilst quite damp.

PENMAN.—Before dipping a new pen into ink thrust it into a fresh-cut potato, and the ink will never cling. When the pen is thickly gummed with dried ink, a few thrusts will clean it perfectly. When not in use, some accountants leave their pens sticking into a potato kept on the desk for the purpose.

N. D.—The following is an excellent cement for leather belting: Common glue and isinglass, equal parts, soaked for ten hours in just enough water to cover them. Bring gradually to a boiling heat and add pure tannin until the whole becomes ropy or appears like the white of eggs. Buff off the surfaces to be joined, apply this cement, and clamp firmly.

B. W. N.—To fix pencil marks so they will not rub out, take well-skimmed milk and dilute with an equal bulk of water. Wash the pencil marks (whether writing or drawing) with this liquid, using a soft flat camel-hair brush, and avoiding all rubbing. Place upon a flat board to dry.

M. W.—The meaning of the expression "aurora borealis" is northern daybreak. It consists of mellow lights differently coloured, that at certain times shoot up from the horizon, and which are generally brighter towards the west. These lights vary and change in different ways, some of them being very remarkable in appearance. Its real cause is not actually known, every explanation thus far offered being found in one respect or another faulty. The most accepted theory is that it is due to the operation of electricity working in some undiscovered manner.

PUNT PADDLER, FAG END OF A UNION JACK, BOOT HOOK, and LIGHTNING JACK, four seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with four young ladies with a view to matrimony. Punt Paddler is medium height, dark, good-looking, fond of home and music. Fag End of a Union Jack is tall, fair, good-looking. Boot Hook is medium height, fair, fond of home and dancing. Lightning Jack is medium height, fair, good-looking. Respondents must be between twenty-one and twenty-five, good-looking.

CHARLIE and WILLIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies about seventeen, medium height, fond of home and children. Charlie is nineteen, fair, good-looking. Willie is twenty, dark.

WILLIAM and JOHN, two Royal Marines, would like to correspond with two young ladies. William is twenty, tall, dark, fond of music and dancing. John is twenty-eight, medium height, dark, fond of home and music.

EDITH and MAUDE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Edith is sixteen, Maude is nineteen.

MUSICAL EDDIE, thirty-eight, would like to correspond with a middle-aged gentleman with a view to matrimony. **SWEET SEVENTEEN** would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty-one, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, with a view to matrimony.

JANE A. twenty-one, medium height, fair hair, grey eyes, would like to correspond with a young man.

FREDIE, nineteen, tall, fair, would like to correspond with a young lady. Respondent must be about eighteen, fair.

SUSIE, eighteen, tall, light hair, grey eyes, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty.

AN OLD STORY.

FISHERMAN John is brave and strong,
None more brave on the coast than he;
He owns a cottage and fishing smack
As snug as ever need be.
And, what is truer than I could wish,
Fisherman John loves me.

Often and often, when day is done,
With smiling lips and eager eyes
He comes to woo me; in every way
That a man may try, he tries
To win me: but that he can never do,
Though he woo me till he dies.

Fisherman Jack is a poorer man;
He owns not cottage nor fishing smack;
But a winning voice and smile are his,
And a manly grace. Alack!
It will not break my heart to tell
That I love Fisherman Jack.

He loves not me; but every night
He sits at the feet of Kate Mahon;
Never a heart has she for him—
For she loves Fisherman John,
Who cares no more for love of hers
Than the sea he sails upon.

Often we wonder, do Kate and I,
That fate should cross us so cruelly;
We think of the lovers we do not love,
And dream of what life would be
If only Fisherman John loved her,
And Fisherman Jack loved me.

JIM, JACK and LIDGE, three friends, would like to correspond with three young ladies. Jim is twenty-one, medium height, fond of music. Jack is twenty-one, tall, dark, fond of dancing. Lidge is twenty-two, tall, fair, of a loving disposition.

NETTIE and FLORENCE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Nettie is twenty, medium height, brown hair and eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition. Florence is nineteen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of music.

LOVELY LOUISE, LOVELY LIZZIE, and FORGET-ME-NOT, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen. Lovely Louise is twenty-eight, Loving Lizzie twenty-one, and Forget-me-not twenty-nine.

ANNIE, twenty-four, medium height, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young man about the same age.

PHYLLIS, MIRIAM and MURIEL, three friends, would like to correspond with three young men with a view to matrimony.

BIRD ALONE, medium height, fair, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty-three.

SELINA and FLORENCE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Selina is twenty-five, tall. Florence is twenty, medium height.

J. H., eighteen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

HARRISON, twenty-two, medium height, fair, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady.

ALICE, MAUD and MAY, three friends, would like to correspond with three young men. Alice is twenty-one, dark, fond of home and children. Maud is eighteen, tall, dark, fond of music and dancing. May is eighteen, dark, fond of music and dancing.

SMILING GEORGE and HAPPY CHARLIE, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Smiling George is twenty-one, medium height, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. Happy Charlie is nineteen, medium height, light hair, blue eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty-two.

GIPSY, twenty-nine, tall, brown hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a tall young man about twenty.

NANCE and POLLIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Nance is nineteen, tall, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition. Pollie is twenty-one, medium height, dark hair and eyes. Respondents must be twenty-four and twenty-six, tall, dark hair, blue eyes.

JOHN P. and HARRY E., two tailors, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. John P. is twenty-one, tall, fair, fond of home and music. Harry E. is twenty-two, tall, fair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of dancing. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty-one.

JOHNSTON and MACAULAY, two Civil Engineers, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Johnston is twenty-two, tall, dark hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of music and dancing. Macaulay is twenty-three, tall, fair hair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of children.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

HEART YARN is responded to by—Lively Topsy.

JOHN C. M. by—Loving Frushy, tall, fair.

S. S. by—Snowdrop, twenty-nine, fond of home.

LIZZIE by—Shamrock, twenty-seven, medium height, fair, fond of home.

S. S. by—Nellie R., twenty-six, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes.

J. P. by—Eva R., nineteen, dark, good-looking.

DEMOTHEUS by—Imp, nineteen.

S. S. by—Marian, thirty-two, tall, good-looking.

LILLIE T. by—H. J. A., twenty, dark.

JOHN C. M. by—Pretty Polly, eighteen, medium height, brown hair, hazel eyes.

SKYRAIL JACK by—Nellie R.

LIZZIE by—Never Fear, twenty-three, tall, fair.

CLEANING ROD by—Eva, twenty, tall, fair, good-looking, fond of music and dancing.

RIFLE STUB by—Clara B., twenty-two, dark hair and eyes.

STARBOARD SHUTE by—Sea Belle, seventeen, medium height, fair.

GROUND SWELL by—Sea Pride, seventeen, medium height, fair, grey eyes, of a loving disposition.

LIVELY GERTY by—Lively Fred, twenty, medium height, dark hair and eyes.

CLEANING ROD by—May E., eighteen, tall, fair, of a loving disposition.

RIFLE STUB by—Maude C., nineteen, tall, dark, fond of home and children.

BOUNT JOCKEY by—Lively Milly, twenty-three, fond of home and dancing.

BILL TRAVELOVE by—P. H., twenty-one, of a loving disposition.

DAISY DEAN by—Lillie, nineteen, medium height, of a loving disposition.

BERTHA by—D. B. J.

HETTY by—C. J. H., twenty-six.

BERTHA by—T. N., twenty-two, medium height, dark.

NELLIE by—EDWARD.

ZENOBIA by—Nellie M., eighteen, medium height, of a loving disposition.

IVY by—A. Z., twenty-one, dark, fond of home.

HEART YARN by—Miriam, eighteen, brown hair, grey eyes.

FANCY THAT by—Awfully Jolly, tall, dark, fond of home.

I AM SURPRISED by—Come Along Do, twenty-three, medium height, fair, light hair, blue eyes.

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